JANUARY 19 Issued Weekly

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Volume XLII
No. 1

ALL-STORY Love Stories

Combined with MUNSEY

January 19
1935

Issued Weekly. On Sale every Wednesday

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111 Rue Réaumur

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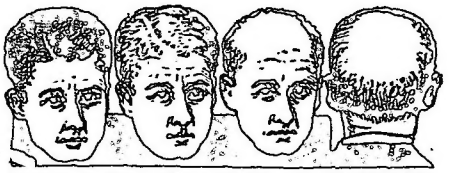

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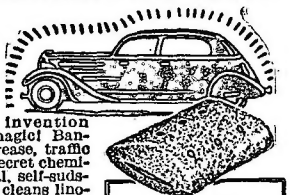

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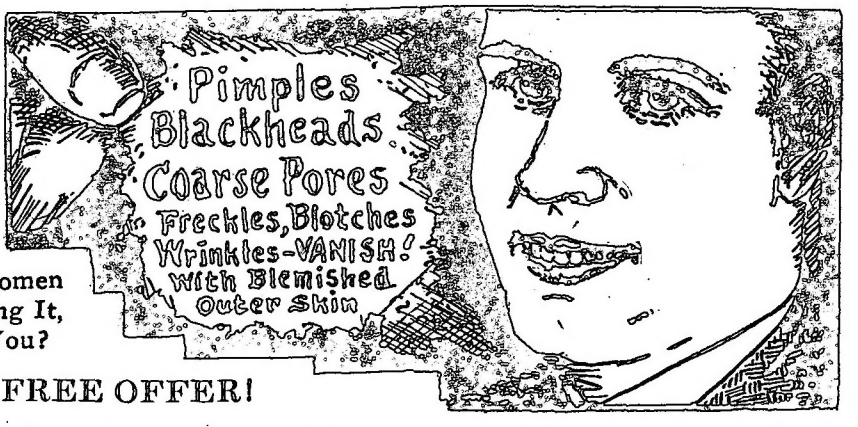

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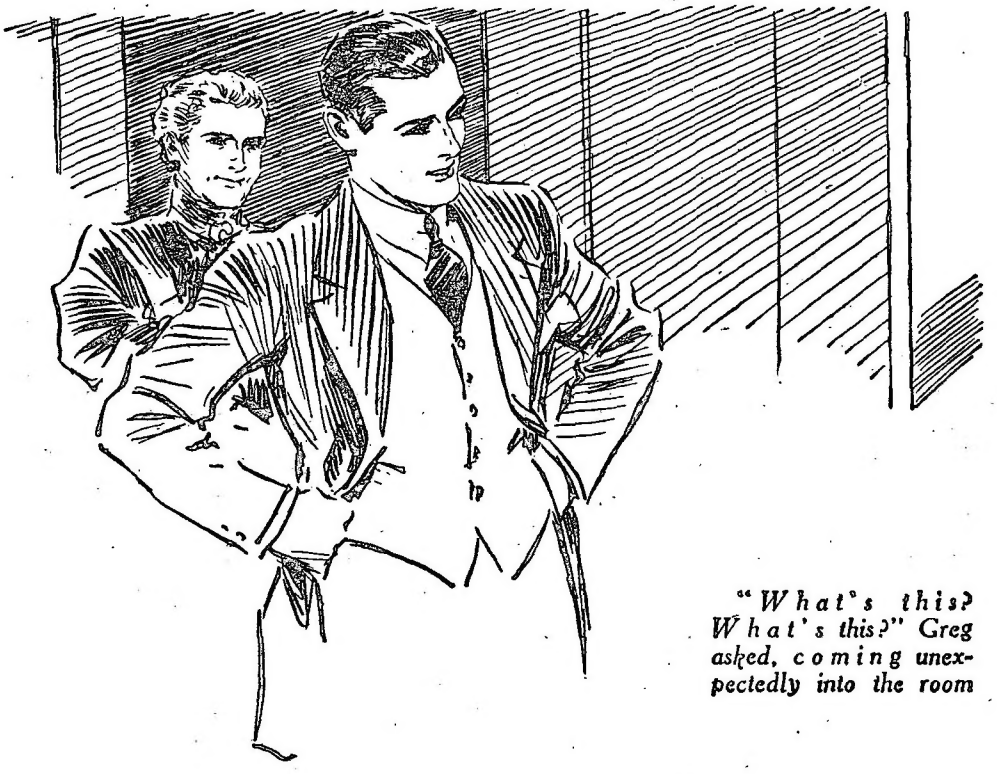


"What's this? What's this?" Greg asked, coming unexpectedly into the room

The Other Woman

By ELLEN HOGUE

She worked, fought, stole her way into his house to find her own

THE big maternity ward was quiet, orderly. Outside the tall windows, snow fell in great flakes that blew up again before they touched ground, so that the little probationer who made a daily mild joke for her patients announced that it was snowing both ways.

When she had got her laugh and gone, the sixteen youngish women who were in the room settled back comfortably against their pillows. The ward was warm and cheerful in spite of the wind that howled in the court below. There were no critical cases in Ward B.

Presently the babies would be brought in; in the meantime everybody

Ann was frantically busy with bathinette and towels and toys, and a shrieking, slippery, rosy baby, but she looked up happily to explain: "Miss Harris is out, so I told her I'd put the baby to bed. This is the first time I ever bathed a baby," she finished proudly

was washed and brushed and ready for inspection at ten o'clock. The nurses would come, and the doctors: Dr. Massie everybody was so crazy about, and Dr. Murphy everybody hated, and the internes in respectful formation behind them.

"Everybody looks fine here. You're

wasting my time!" Dr. Massie would roar.

Dr. Murphy would glare at the young mothers in the double row of beds as if he hated them as much as they did him. Then the stars and their satellites would depart, and an hour later, the trays would arrive.

The doctors came, the trays came, each day at exactly the same moment. This hospital was a good deal like West Point: efficiency, punctuality, monotony and all.

But on this particular day, on the day of the great storm, there was a sudden break in the nearly unbreakable routine. Immediately after midmorning temperatures, the door at the end of the room swung open, and two nurses, one the hospital superintendent herself, appeared with a male visitor. This, in spite of the rigid rule that no visitors of either sex were allowed in the free wards until after three P.M.

The two nurses glanced sharply and quellingly around them; the little red-faced man, preoccupied and self-conscious, followed them. All three went directly to Bed Ten.

There was immediately a good deal of excitement. Bed Ten was the mystery of the ward. Bed Ten never had any visitors; she showed no interest in her surroundings; she did not nurse her baby, and she never talked to anybody.

The little man, who was evidently a lawyer, spoke pleasantly and quietly and began to spread papers on the bedside table and to shake his fountain pen. Ann Smith lay watching him.

(The ward, to one woman, doubted fifteen times a day whether she'd a right to call herself "Mrs." Ann Smith.)

She was a tall girl; very tall. When her dark head was propped on the white pillows, her feet almost touched the end of the long iron bed. In between head and feet there was practically nothing; she was as thin as a rail.

She was not a pretty girl in the ordinary sense. Not doll pretty. Her mouth was too generous for that, her slender hands too long, the fine bone of cheek and jaw too hard and tense.

But she was rather attractive. Even with the flanelette hospital gown buttoned high about her thin young neck. Her eyes, set in deep sockets of fever and pain, burned deeply, darkly blue; her lashes were long; her hair curled flatly about her temples.

"Mrs. Smith," the lawyer began, clearing his throat, as the ward listened. "Mrs. Smith, are you sure you're reconciled to this? Do you realize what it will mean? No communication, you understand, no privileges. These are rich people."

He was a fussy little man, ridiculous somehow. Dry as dust in this place of life and death and deep emotions. Ann Smith, lying against her pillows, suddenly smiled at him. Reassuringly. Gallantly. Nobody had ever seen her smile before.

"Don't feel sad about it," she told him huskily. "And don't—don't let your clients worry! I shan't bother them. If they're good to him it will be all right with me."

"Your husband is dead?" the lawyer asked doubtfully.

"He is very dead," Ann Smith said clearly. And signed her name.

THE ward was electrified. They were poor, most of them, and ignorant; and pain ridden and trouble ridden. Most of them were worrying just how they were going to take care of the children they had brought into the world. But they all wanted

their children; had no idea of parting from them.

Ann Smith was signing her baby away. For adoption.

Not being fools, the watching women knew quite suddenly that there was one who had been through, in poverty and pain, more than body and spirit could stand; someone who must bid goodby to the prize she had won in anguish.

They had not liked her very much; they had resented her silences. But now they pitied her.

"Poor thing," one of them whispered. Another wept into her pillow.

"That finishes things," Ann Smith remarked steadily.

The lawyer was putting papers back into his bag. For the first time, Ann spoke to the two nurses, the witnesses, standing by.

"Can I have my baby?" she asked. "I'd like to hold him for a little while."

"Of course you can have your baby!" the superintendent said with amazing softness. And then turned and spoke sharply to the weeping nurse:

"Control yourself! This is quite a usual thing. Quite usual!"

When she had her baby in her arms, Ann spoke to it. In a whisper, so that no one else could hear.

"My little thing. My darling. I wish I didn't love you. I've tried not to. I didn't want to feel like this."

Her face was haggard; it was a frightened young face, white to the lips.

"She's crying, poor girl," Bed Thirteen told Bed Twelve in an excited murmur.

Ann would not have heard her if she had shouted.

"My little baby," she whispered. "My little, little boy. They'll be so good to you. They can do so much more for you than I can. I can only starve you, and leave you by yourself, and make you suffer.

"You won't have to go through that, my darling. Not what I've been through. You—you'll understand some day that your mother didn't want to give you up, won't you? Please do, baby. Please know that it's—that it's killed me, letting you go!"

The voice of Rachel, weeping for her children, not to be comforted—

"I shall never see you in this life again. Goodby, my darling, my little son."

JUST a year later, on just such another day of wind and snow, the tall girl who was a saleswoman in Wallace and Company's enormous Bargain Store snapped her account book shut, counted the contents of her cash register into the satchel of a morose guard, and prepared to go home for the night.

She was a slim girl, with deep blue eyes set in black lashes, and a wide, sweet, unhappy mouth.

Ann Smith, shabby and dignified and hard working, had been selling toys for six months now in the big, airy department. For the last two weeks it had been thronged with anxious mothers and extravagant fathers and very small, very delightful persons who had been coming in herds to see Santa Claus. Ann, it was conceded by all her fellow workers, was absolutely wonderful, selling toys.

"She's batty about the kids," they marveled. "It doesn't make any difference what they're like; she goes for them. And of course the mamas and papas fall for that."

Tonight, however, she was unusually

listless, indifferent, tired and quiet; not that anybody noticed any extra weariness in a world where everyone was weary! Only two more days till Christmas, Wallace employees exulted to each other! Two more days of this hideous strain, and it would be all over.

"F'heaven's sake, where was you, Ann?" Maisie Peters demanded as the tall, dark girl pushed her way into the big dressing room where half a hundred young women were making up before the mirrors.

"I've been through half an hour. I didn't care who wanted what!" Maisie, small and pretty and yellow haired, announced defiantly as Ann snatched her hat and coat from the rack.

The two of them pushed their way through a swinging door into the snowy street.

"You ought to get a coat like mine," Maisie, clad in furs, shrieked above the roar of storm and traffic.

"I know, I'm cold. Darn it, I've got to get hold of a coat some way!" Ann shrieked back amiably.

She was, indeed, too thinly dressed; she was shivering. The coat she wore was meant for fall, not winter. Maisie and all the other girls could manage a down payment and five a week for furs. Somehow Ann could not. But her little hat was smart; her hair curled back against it; her thick lashes caught the snow.

"I'm cold, I'm frozen, but I love this storm," she exulted to Maisie.

"You're crazy," the other girl declared cheerfully as the two went down the slippery, drifted subway steps.

They rode uptown for seventy blocks, got off and fought their way toward the East River.

They lived together in a big brownstone boarding house. Maisie, who made friends with the ease of a puppy or a kitten, had had "an awful case," as she called it, on Ann from the first moment she laid eyes on her. And Ann, lonely, hungry for affection, had liked common, hard-headed, loyal little Maisie—loved her dearly now. The two girls roomed together and were staunch allies against the world.

Maisie sniffed as they entered the warm, odorous hallway.

The wet coats and hats of the other boarders were spread on the radiator and antler rack; there was an indescribable smell of cooking and wool and old carpets and rubbers and steam.

"It's hot in here. Wouldn't you know Old Lady Conelly would give us cornbeef and cabbage again?"

"I don't care if I eat camel!" Ann declared, shaking the snow from her shoulders before the big radiator that was sending out blasts of cheerful warmth.

"I'm starved. Only I cannot, I *cannot* face that dining room again tonight. Mrs. Phelps talking about her neuralgia, and Mrs. Gordon telling us about the five servants she used to have before she came down in the world."

"I haven't got a date," said Maisie. "How about chipping in and having dinner upstairs?"

"It would be heaven," Ann said simply.

SHE went on up to pull out the card table and cover it with a clean towel while Maisie conferred with Mrs. Conelly in the regions below.

The practice of eating meals in the room was rather encouraged by the slatternly, poverty-stricken woman who ran this particular boarding house. There were no second helpings that way; and the inefficient, underpaid

"You make me sick!" cried Maisie. "You need a coat, you need everything, and then you give all your salary away to a sick kid! Anybody'd think that every hungry kid in the world was yours!"

"Don't, Maisie," Ann said huskily. "Any—any hungry kid in the world might be mine—"

housemaids who came and went weekly were glad enough to carry a tray upstairs for an extra quarter.

"This is a fierce hole," Maisie frequently remarked. "Listen, Ann, when spring comes we ought to get a place of our own. A little flat, maybe, where we could entertain our boy friends."

"It's not so bad here," Ann always countered. "We're fed and housed for eleven a week apiece. We couldn't do much better than that."

Maisie Peters was always discontented. She had a fierce regard for her own rights, which she protected when necessary with a hard, loud young voice and great flashings of mascaraed black eyes and tossings of her blondined mop of hair. She had never been rich, but neither had she known bitter poverty. She had had, all her life, enough to eat, a new dress to wear when she wanted it.

Ann was different. Ann had slept

on park benches more than once. She had lain awake all one hideous night in a hideous room in a slum, afraid to go to sleep for fear someone would come in.

She had walked the streets of New York, looking for work, with cardboard in her shoes to keep her feet from the blistering pavements. She had stood and stared into the East River, despair eating her young soul, and the waters calling her.

Her job, Mrs. Conelly's monotonous meals were luxury to Ann. Tonight, she got into her flannel bathrobe that made her look like a slim boy, with an actual consciousness of its comfort.

Maisie changed, too, to one of the shabby, ornate negligees hanging in her end of the closet. She did not go to the cold, dark bathroom down the hall to wash her face as Ann had done. Cold cream and new make-up were enough for an evening at home.

"Listen, dear," she said into the mirror, "we've got a wonderful little dress number in the department! I bought one today. It's being altered. Cute high neck with white leather, and cuffs that are something to write home about. It's a regular eighteen dollar, and it's on for seven. I had one laid aside for you.

"You certainly need a dress," she added thoughtfully, coming to help Ann with the tray and the rickety card table. "It would be adorable on you. You know, pleats. I always say pleats *make* a dress."

"I can't afford a dress. Come and eat your dinner while it's hot," Ann admonished her.

A moment later she defiantly repeated what she had said: "I can't, Maisie. The dress I'm wearing is all right, and I have my black for best."

"For Heaven's sake, both of them are terrible!" Maisie protested, shocked. "You've got your pay, haven't you? You got it today. You've been giving your money away again!" she accused.

Ann said, "I couldn't help it. I—"

"I know the rest of the tune," Maisie declared scathingly. "You needn't go on with it. Some young one came in that needed shoes or Lee Parson's little boy is sick again—"

"No, it wasn't that," Ann declared, flushing. "I saved out my expenses, Maisie. But that girl in the bundle wrapping. Her little brother's got T.B."

"Well, for crying in public!" Maisie ejaculated. "All anybody's got to say is 'sick child' to you and you go crazy. You need a dress, you need everything, and yet you act as if every hungry kid in the world was yours."

Ann said, a little thickly, "Don't, Maisie! Any—any hungry kid in the world might be mine, after all."

THEY returned to the subject later. Ann was in bed, reading; Maisie was giving herself an interminable manicure before the mirror.

"You're not like anyone I've ever known," she declared suddenly. "You're better looking, for one thing."

"Oh, I'm not!" Ann protested; she laid her book down beside her and gave Maisie her beautiful, friendly smile.

"You say that because you're so fond of me."

"No, I say it because it's so," practical little Maisie declared. "That's why I hate your not buying clothes. I hate to see you wasting your looks the way you do. You never go out, Ann; you never have dates. And you could! You'd make up beautiful, and you'd carry good clothes so well.

"You're different in other ways,"

she mused. "You shouldn't be holding down a lousy clerking job in a store, educated the way you are. I never saw anything like the way you read, anyway, foreign books and all. You could get a real job and meet people and marry somebody big if you set out to do it. Somebody swell like Mr. Greg Wallace, even! You could marry *him!*"

"Mr. Greg Wallace is the owner of our store, and he wouldn't look at me," Ann protested. "And, besides, he's married already."

She sat up, her arms about her knees, her shining dark hair falling across her cheek.

"My education, such as it is, and my looks, such as they are, didn't get me much when I was really looking for a job," she went on, as if to herself.

"I doubt if I could do much better than I'm doing now. I like working for Wallace's, and I don't mind not having pretty clothes. Why, you don't think that going without a dress now and then is a real trouble, do you? Because I don't.

"I—once a long time ago, I knew a girl who had to give her baby away because she couldn't get work. Her—her husband had deserted her," Ann explained huskily.

She got out of bed, pulled on her bathrobe and went to the window to look out, spoke with her back to her friend.

"Maisie, anybody who has a kid and hasn't money enough to do for it knows what trouble *is!*"

"Well, that certainly was tough," Maisie admitted. "But what I say is if you fixed up and married above you, somebody like Mr. Wallace, there must be millions of them—"

"Oh, no, there aren't!" Ann declared, laughing and composed again. "They don't make them like him."

"Well, somebody with money, I mean," Maisie admitted. "You could have all the dresses you wanted and do something for the sick kids besides. I think it's worth trying, Ann. I do, really.

"Mrs. Wallace was in today," she added suddenly. "She had on a sable coat that was—well, it was swell! But I couldn't help thinking how much better *you'd* look in it. He was following her around, asking her if she wanted anything she saw. 'No, Greg, darling, I never buy clothes here. You know I don't," Maisie mimicked, suddenly and bitterly. "She makes me sick with her red hair and her green eyes and her pearls!"

"I saw her, too," Ann said quietly. "She was up in my department, buying Christmas toys for her little boy."

She was oddly pale again, white and shaken. She moved nervously about the room.

"That kid of hers will have everything," said Maisie. "Heaven knows I don't begrudge it to him, or to Mr. Greg. Mr. Greg is a prince of a fellow."

"She bought about a hundred dollars' worth of toys for the—for her baby today," Ann said. The clear color had not returned to her face; her lashes glittered. "There was a rocking horse. I never saw such a cute rocking horse for a little boy! He'll wake up, and his nurse will bring him downstairs in the morning—"

"Yeah, his nurse!" Maisie said scornfully. "I bet it'll be his nurse and not his mamma. Believe you me, she don't waste much time hanging over the cradle! She was telling *him* today how much she had to do. She's all worn out signing checks. And she's looking for somebody right now to take that off her, poor thing.

"I heard her asking him about it. 'Haven't you got somebody in your great store, Greg, *deah,*' she says. 'Somebody intelligent you can spare,' she says, 'that will relieve me of this sort of responsibility? I detest Christmas shopping,' she says. Gee, I'm sorry for her! She's only got about twenty maids and a butler and a cook—why, what's the matter, Ann?" Maisie demanded suddenly. "You ain't sick, dear? You ain't going to faint? I'll get you some water."

"No, no," Ann declared. "I'm not going to faint."

She was on her feet; she was panting; the glorious color was blazing into her cheeks; her eyes were stars.

"Did you mean it, Maisie?" she asked. "Did you mean it when you said I could get a different kind of job?"

"Of course I meant it!" Maisie declared stoutly. "You mean you'd like to work for the Wallaces?"

"I'd love to work for the Wallaces," Ann said passionately, her hand pressed against her thudding heart.

"I'd hate to leave you, Maisie. You know I would. But if I could get a job with Mrs. Wallace—Maisie, I'm not a stenographer, of course, but I could take notes, and I could write letters for her. And I speak French. I would do anything—"

"You haven't got a case on Mr. Greg, have you?" Maisie asked with sudden severity. "Because it wouldn't do you any good if you had. He's crazy about her."

"No, no, no!" Ann cried again, laughing now.

She was moving restlessly about the room, her hands clasped, all her beautiful body alive, pulsing with life.

"But I want that job. I'd give ten years off the last end of my life for it! You're shrewd; you know how to do things. How would you go about getting it?"

"I wouldn't be too eager," Maisie declared promptly. "A woman like that wouldn't hire you if she thought you were crazy to get the job. Why not go up there Christmas Day and just say you've heard about it and you'd like to try it? You want to look smart, fix all up—"

The color was dying out of Ann's face; the eagerness out of her eyes.

"You were right about buying that dress, Maisie," she said dully. "The ones I have are awful. I'm shabby and poor and—and unprepossessing in the clothes I've got. And I've got a feeling that Mrs. Greg would judge a good deal by externals."

"Sure," Maisie admitted. "She'd go by how you looked. I'd lend you money, Ann, but I spent all mine," she added guiltily. "You could borrow my coat. It would be short for you, but that won't matter if it's fur. My dresses would be up to your knees."

"It's not fair!" Ann cried suddenly, wildly. "A woman like that has everything. Her splendid husband and her home and her little boy. You and I could live for a year on the pearls she wore today, Maisie!

"And all I want is the privilege of working for her! I'd work for a pittance; I'd work for nothing; I'd go down on my knees to her for that job. And I haven't a dress to go down on my knees in. She'd just look and see that my elbows were out and my skirt shiny, and she'd laugh! And nobody I know has any money. I can't borrow—"

Maisie was weeping, too.

"Ann, dear! Ann, honey, don't cry! I never saw you cry before. Listen, dear, here's what we can do—"

CHAPTER II

SOME women are cut out for crime. Of these your gun molls are recruited; of these was the queen of shop lifters who died recently, somewhere in the East. Sick as she was, she had plenty of money to pay her hospital bills, and there was enough left to bury her. She had spent a good many of her fifty years in prison. But she might be called, in her way, a success.

Ann Smith, frightened and in despair, was not successful in her one and only experience with breaking the law. Maisie had told her that most of the girls had done this at least once, and got away with it.

"You borrow a dress, Ann, that's all. You can walk into a size thirty-six, can't you? Well, then, you come up to the department at ten o'clock. I'll lay it on that table under the window and you pick it up there. You'll only wear it for an hour, and then you can press it and bring it back. Wouldn't you do that much?"

"Anything," Ann said firmly, "short of murder."

But she was shaking when she went up to the dress department in her mid-morning rest period. She felt like a thief, and she looked like a thief.

Which is, perhaps, why she looked for the first time into Greg Wallace's eyes with the hand of a store detective on her shoulder.

"I caught her dead to rights, Mr. Wallace," the detective said. "She looked so funny that I kept an eye on her. She took the dress and was beatin' it down to the dressing room when I caught up with her."

"All right, Murphy," Greg Wallace said. "You don't have to hang onto her. She can't get out of here. Get out yourself, will you? I want to talk to her."

He sat behind his big desk, staring at her with troubled, unhappy eyes. He was a big young man, not handsome in the conventional sense. He did not have curly hair nor a Greek profile, but his mouth was big and kind, his eyes gray and set deep under strongly marked brows, his hair a thick, unruly brown mop.

He had a way of running his hands through his hair when he was puzzled, and he was puzzled and dismayed now.

Gregory Wallace had inherited his big store from his father; he was interested in all his employees as human beings, liked them, wanted them to like him. There is always theft in a big store, and now and then an example has to be made of a thief who is caught, but Greg Wallace detested having to deal out grim justice.

This girl who had been haled before him was paid decent wages; there was no need for her to steal! And she must have known that detectives were posted throughout the store. What had possessed her? Poor child, she was trembling; she was white to the lips.

"Sit down, Miss—er—Miss Smith," he said suddenly.

Ann sank into a chair, her knees actually giving under her.

"You know, of course, that there is a penalty attached to shop lifting," he told her. "I'm sorry to see anyone in the sort of jam you're in. I'd like to know, before I take action, if there are extenuating circumstances."

His voice was so kind, his whole attitude so gentle, that Ann felt her throat thicken, her eyes fill with tears. She winked them back frantically. She must not break down; she must keep her head now!

"I was not stealing," she told him. "I meant to return the dress. I wanted to wear it just once. The one I have on is shabby, and I have only one other at home, as shabby as this. I needed to look well—for a purpose. I beg your pardon for bothering you with this," she added. "There's not much use in talking, is there? You will not believe me."

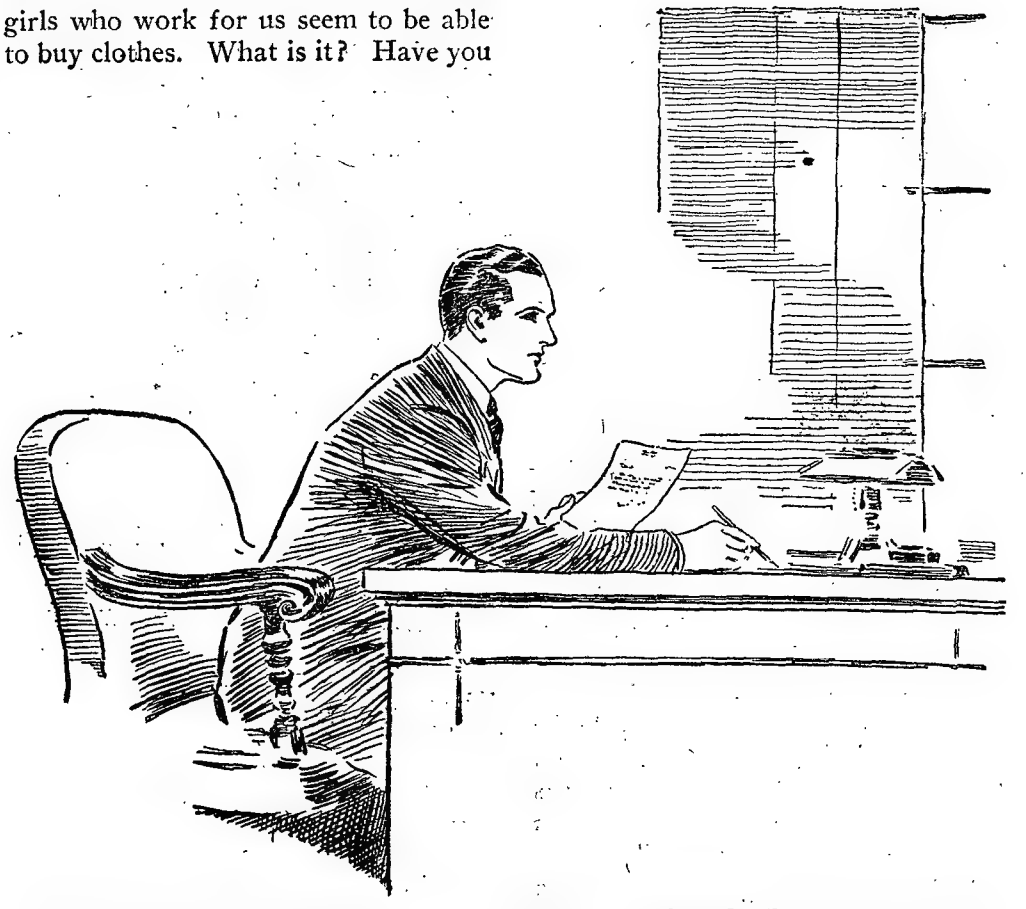
"Why," he asked curiously, "haven't you any dresses that aren't shabby? You're paid enough to get by on, aren't you? The dress you took was priced seven dollars. Why would any girl risk her job and her liberty for a seven dollar dress? Most of the girls who work for us seem to be able to buy clothes. What is it? Have you a family that you're supporting?"

He had never seen anyone grow so white at a word.

"No," she said, in a thin, frightened voice. "No, I have no family."

"Whatever you wanted to do in this dress must have been important."

He smiled at her suddenly. "Don't be so afraid of me," he urged. "You know, of course, that no corporation can afford to have its employees stealing it blind. On the other hand, we don't want to send people who have worked for us to prison; we try to find



The first time Gregory Wallace ever saw Ann, she had the hand of a store detective on her shoulder

out what's made them do anything so drastic as you have done.

"This was such a small theft, and you risked so much! And your record is good—I had it looked up while you were waiting outside with Murphy. The buyer in your department told me that you are promising material, a rather unusual person, she said. I thought when you came in that she was right. If you could talk to me—"

"How—how kind you are about it!" Ann whispered.

And she decided quite suddenly to tell him as much of the truth as she could.

"IT was a job," she admitted unhappily. "A new job. I wanted to apply for it."

"Don't you like the job you have?" Gregory Wallace asked her.

She said at once, "I like it so much, Mr. Wallace!"

"But you wanted to leave my employ?"

"No," Ann said, startling him. "I didn't. That wasn't it."

It was oddly possible to explain to him. She could talk to him as if she had known him for a long time; not at all as she would speak to an employer who was about to discharge her at the very least, send her to jail at the worst.

He sat, big and silent and interested behind his desk, watching her face; watching her eyes.

How unhappy this girl was about something! The Gregory Wallace who was not the big owner of a big store, but the little boy, who had always brought home stray animals to his magnificent house, was moved to wish that he might put his arms about this frightened, miserable young woman. He would have liked to dry her eyes

"I caught her dead to rights," the detective said. "I saw her take the dress"

with his big handkerchief, and tell her not to worry about the confounded dress, and send her back, comforted and consoled, to the toy department.

That wouldn't do, of course. That was sentimentality.

"You say you wanted to work for my wife?" he asked, honestly amazed. "You wanted a job with her so badly that you—that you—"

"Yes, that's what I mean," Ann answered. "I've had a decent education, Mr. Wallace. When I was little I lived abroad. I can speak French, and I thought that might be in my favor. I could do secretarial work. I would do anything."

"But didn't you know?" said Gregory. "My wife left for Florida last night. She's to spend the next month there."

Ann stared at him.

"No," she said dully. "I didn't know that. Then what I did was for nothing, wasn't it?"

"Quite for nothing," her employer answered her.

"Your—your little boy went, too?" Ann faltered.

"No, the boy stays home with me," Gregory admitted, surprised. "He has his nurse. And Mrs. Wallace was very tired—oh, I say, look here!"

For, quite without warning, Ann had put her clasped hands and her bright head down on the desk; she was crying quietly, despairingly.

Greg Wallace found himself patting this caught, self-confessed lawbreaker on the shoulder, saying what he had never meant to say.

"Don't cry like that, you poor kid! Look here now, there's no reason you can't have the job, anyway, if you want it as badly as all that! We really need someone," he added. "For buying, and managing—"

Ann was looking at him through drenched lashes, her blue eyes dark with feeling.

"You mean you'll try me?" she whispered. "You mean, you'll trust me, like that, after what I did?"

He was a little confused by her steady scrutiny, perhaps a little ashamed of the absurd impulse that had moved him to comfort her. He grinned at her, half guiltily.

"We won't say anything to anybody about what you did," he told her. "I'll shut Murphy up. This little session we've had is between us. I believe what you told me; I'm gambling on my judgment."

"You'll trust me in your house, with your things—with your little boy!" Ann whispered. She was shaken, bewildered, unbelieving. "I'll do anything, I'll work my fingers to the bone for you after this. I'd die for you!" she told him with sudden passion.

He was on his feet, embarrassed, even a little displeased.

"That's all right," he told her shortly. "You quit your job here today. I'll expect you at the house tomorrow. There'll be stuff to do right away. Everything is at sixes and sevens; maybe you can straighten us out. You'll have a free hand, and can get your bearings before Mrs. Wallace comes home."

That was all. It was over.

She was to love this man, madly, wildly, before she was through. But she didn't know that, now.

IT was hopeless, of course, from the very beginning. He had merely stooped to pick something sick and hurt from the gutter; she was no more than any sick, broken little animal to him. And, even if he had not had to stoop so, there was his wife; lovely

little Mrs. Wallace who had her picture in the smart magazines, her personal maid, and her famous big race horse, and her charge accounts, and her popularity.

But Ann was to wonder whether the shaken, frantic storm of loyalty and thanks that swept her on that day in his big, handsome office wasn't the actual beginning of love.

That was later, of course. At the time, she walked in a dream; she moved on winged feet through hope come true. There was Maisie to say goodby to, the cheap bag to pack, the trip by subway and bus to the Park Avenue address where the Wallaces lived.

Their apartment was on the roof, a penthouse, an establishment of some twenty big, airy rooms and half a dozen baths. Wintry sunlight streamed through the long French windows into the drawing-room when Ann came in; a fire burned on the hearth; the air was heavy with the scent of flowers. There were roses on the big piano, violets on the little table beside the big davenport.

Ann, drawing off her shabby gloves, looking about her, sniffed with the frank enjoyment of a child.

"Oh, how sweet!" she said.

The elderly housemaid who had admitted her, beamed at her.

"I like a bouquet myself," she confided.

Mr. Wallace had given orders that this new young secretary was to be deferred to and considered. The servant quarters had been rather doubtful of her, coming from the store at all, but anybody could see by looking at her, kind old Mamie Riordan thought, that she was a lady, even if her clothes were shabby.

"You'd like to go up and rest, ma'am? Or would you be shown through first?" she asked a little primly.

Ann, self-possessed and cheerful, gave her questioner a serious, friendly look.

"Well, it's my first day, and I feel pretty strange," she confided. "I never did anything just like this before. But I'm not a bit tired. I hope you'll show me about and help me."

"Like she was a child, just a sweet child," Mamie said later below stairs. "And she's no fool at that; she took right hold. 'Mrs. Waldron is sick, I understand,' she says. 'She's the housekeeper, isn't she? I'll be glad to take over her duties,' she says, 'till she's around again.'"

The house was perched high above the city; from the window of her own comfortable, pretty room, Ann could see the winter stars. She was on the top floor with the rest of the Wallace employees, but in a little wing, and there was a tiny balcony to her room, crusted deep now in snow.

It was a lavishly planned house. On the first floor, there were the great living rooms and the dining room and the kitchens; on the second, Mr. and Mrs. Wallace had their beautiful suite, and there were four guest rooms and at the back the enormous, sunshiny nursery.

Here, Ann was introduced to a starchy, white capped person with a proud mien and a jealous eye.

"Miss Smith's runnin' everythin'!" Old Mamie, enslaved by now, declared to the baby's English nurse.

"Not my department, I hope," Miss Lucy Harris declared at once. "I never have had any interference here."

"I wouldn't dream of interfering," Ann said a little breathlessly, laying her hand on the white clad arm that barred the door. "Mamie has been

telling me, and Mr. Wallace told me, too, what a wonderful job you're doing with the baby! You mustn't think I want to bother you in any way. I just stopped to be introduced to you and to the—to the son and heir."

There was something about the frank statement of her position, and perhaps the hint of intimacy with Mr. Wallace, which impressed Miss Harris' British soul.

"The boy's awake," she admitted, mollified. "He's in his play pen."

A moment later Ann was kneeling before a curly haired, blue-eyed little boy.

CHAPTER III

"WELL, and what's this, what's this?" Gregory Wallace asked, coming into the big nursery two weeks later.

Fire blossomed in the fireplace, the room was pleasant with the scent of steam and talcum and soap. Ann, enveloped in a big white apron, was busy before the hearth with bathinette, and towels and various toys and the shrieking, slippery, rosy baby.

"Miss Harris is out," she told him. "She hadn't had a day off in weeks, so I told her I'd put the baby to bed. This is the first time I ever bathed a baby and I'm doing it here because there seems to be a draft in the bathroom. Look here, sir, let me get your ear!" she added severely to young Gregory who was making a mad attempt to eat soap and wash cloth and floating duck at one and the same time.

Mamie, coming out of the shadows of the inner room with certain small garments that had been frankly warming over a radiator, greeted her employer with the brisk familiarity of the old servant.

"Set over there, Mr. Greg," she advised, indicating a chintz covered wing chair. "You'll get a good view of the show and won't get splashed. Miss Ann's took to it like a duck to water, but he's a great messer, that little lad."

A great messer he was. The hearth-rug was soaked; Ann was soaked from head to foot.

"Was I ever in my *life*—warm and —dry and *neat?*" she cried, laughing, lifting the little boy into a big towel, snatching him to her heart.

Gregory Wallace, world weary, work weary, sat in the big chair and thought that this was a very pleasant little scene he was witnessing by chance. He was home early today; it had been a hard day for him, and he had quit at four with a racking, nervous headache.

Leaning back, laughing a little, he felt his headache going. Usually he came home just in time to be ushered into the nursery for a mere glimpse of his sleeping son and heir, and, of course, once he was asleep, young Greg could never be waked up! Miss Harris, who was invaluable and expensive, made that quite clear; she never encouraged getting the boy excited.

"For Heaven's sake, Greg," young Mrs. Wallace said frequently when he was at home, Sundays or holidays, "what do you want to have the baby in for? You'll just upset his routine! I suppose we could play hide-and-seek with him, or whatever it is you want to do, but he cries after a session like that. It only makes him miserable. He's much better off left strictly alone."

Greg, smiling and resigned, had hoped that when the kid was older—say, eight or ten—he would be fun to go around with; then maybe he'd know that his father was the kind of guy who liked to go to circuses, who liked to go

swimming! But that was a long way off.

Tonight it came to him quite suddenly that he had been missing something, that Greg the baby was quite as charming, as intriguing, as Greg the adolescent son could ever be.

When the bath and dressing were over and the big bowl of cereal and milk had come and been disposed of, he held the child while Ann went about, competently folding and picking up and putting away. There was something about the tiny, relaxed little body flattened against his big chest—

Greg felt his arm tighten, felt his throat thicken with an emotion of pure love. This was his own boy, growing up under his eyes, to play with and love always. This was young Greg the Third.

"You feel that way about me, do you, old feller?" he asked awkwardly when little Greg put up a confident hand and tentatively examined his father's ears and mouth and nose.

Ann came at last. The beautiful, homely, domestic hour had to end; the small crib was waiting, the baby was nodding with sleep. Greg caught the clean, sweet odor of warm young flesh and powder as the girl bent over him; her dark hair was matted against her white forehead, her eyes were somberly blue.

The big man got to his feet and placed the limp little body in her waiting arms. She stood for a moment, her cheek pressed against the tiny head, her whole lovely face intent on the miracle she held in her arms.

"He's wonderful, isn't he?" she asked in a hushed whisper.

"*We* think he's wonderful," Greg said, a little breathlessly.

Something born of twilight and lamplight was moving in his heart. He felt—by George, it was holding the little fellow, of course—but he felt for a moment that he was going to cry.

"I can't tell you what it means to me, seeing the kid like this," he told her gruffly. "My wife and I—we don't have much of him. You know when you get a girl like Miss Harris, you don't have much to do with it.

"Kids don't have croup nowadays, do they?" he asked wistfully. "I read jokes about fathers walking the floor with their kids. I don't know how the comic papers get that way. There are mighty few times I've even held him, let alone walked with him."

Ann was staring at him over the baby's head; something in his voice, something in his commonplace, matter-of-fact, "*my wife and I*," his "*our baby*," had recalled her to life from a world of dreams. She was not pale, but the beautiful crimson in her cheeks faded a little; she eyed him steadily.

"The way they bring up babies now is better, of course," she told him. "They aren't so much fun, maybe, but they're better off. And Miss Harris is a wonderful nurse!"

She went into the inner room. Greg heard her, presently, putting the little boy to bed; there was something in the gentle murmuring sounds she made that gave him a picture of what she was doing. Now she was lowering the baby into the pillows; now she was tucking the covers in, raising the window—

He was still in the big chair when she came back.

"I'm tired," he explained to her. "I hate to get up. I'm not in your way, am I?"

"Why, no, you're not in the way at all," Ann declared, sinking into a lower chair across the hearth from him. "I have to wait," she explained

conscientiously. "Mamie's busy downstairs for another fifteen minutes. Then she'll come up and sit with him until Miss Harris comes home."

"Look here," Greg said as eagerly as a boy, "fifteen minutes—dinner's a full half hour off! It will give you time to get ready. I haven't any date tonight. Couldn't you have dinner with me?"

She said quickly, sharply, "Oh, no, I don't think I'd better do that! I think I'd better eat upstairs, the way I always do."

She chided herself afterwards, remembering the sharpness of her refusal. She was, after all, not a servant. There was no reason why she should not dine tête-à-tête with Greg Wallace when he had one of his rare nights off, in his own home.

"I was just stupid," she told herself hotly, "holding back like that. He'll think I'm silly and horrid. His wife wouldn't care; she wouldn't think anything of it. I don't know why I had to be so stiff with him. He's been so kind to me, you'd think I'd realize that. You'd think I'd be gracious to him!"

It was a queer shyness, perhaps a sort of intuition, that kept her aloof from him.

Her instinct was true. And yet when, a few days later, she ran squarely into him downtown, she accepted his invitation to lunch quite simply.

SHE had got her first pay check that morning; it had been on her breakfast tray in a plain square envelope addressed in Greg's strong, big handwriting.

Ann had entirely forgotten the matter of pay for her services. The fact that, for nearly a month, she had worked rather hard meant nothing to her at all. The housekeeper was still quite sick; Ann paid bills, wrote checks, ordered supplies, kept the household running smoothly. In the afternoons she had been working in Greg's fine library, tabulating and rearranging the books.

She had enjoyed every minute of every day. The old times of the cramped pay envelope and of no pay envelope at all seemed very far away in this atmosphere of plenty and comfort and peace.

Greg, she discovered, had just doubled the salary that she had been getting at the store; and she had no board to pay, no daily expenses. She had more than a hundred dollars to spend as she saw fit.

She was, after all, only twenty-two. She went straight to her closet, began feverishly to pull out the shabby garments it contained. She needed everything.

By the time Greg met her at noon, she had bought a new dress and a new hat and new shoes, and had them on. Her coat was the same, of course, but when she flung it back over her chair, she gave the effect of being as well dressed as any woman in the big, luxurious hotel dining room.

Greg smiled into the blue eyes across the table, gave his order quickly and competently. He thought that she was as pretty as a picture today, this quiet Miss Smith, and he told her so with a frank gallantry that brought the color to her face.

She was very shy and constrained first, thankful that the orchestra, playing in a corner, made conversation unnecessary; but halfway through the meal her tenseness left her. Greg had had a lonely childhood, too, he told her; he too had been an only child. Presently they were talking like old friends.

Ann had called him Greg for many days in her heart before she actually said the word. They were racing like children through the park in the winter twilight "Oh, Greg—stop!" she cried, breathless and panting

"My father thought a kid ought to be on his own early. He sent me off to boarding school when I was only eight," Greg told her. "Believe me, I'd never send my kid away as early as that. When my mother died they brought me home for the funeral and then popped me right back again!"

Ann's big eyes were round with horror at the mere idea of that homesick little boy.

"But my life was almost as lonely. You had youngsters to play with; I never did. I never went anywhere without my father and mother," she confided gravely.

"They were teachers, both of them; they married late. We had sabbatical years in Europe — that's where I learned French. I'd traveled a lot before I was fourteen. I'd seen England, I'd visited the Vatican. And then both

of them died, and of course they didn't leave anything."

Her lips twisted and she looked away. Greg noticed the way her hair sprang up against the brim of the new hat; the collar of her dress made her throat look long and white, the slender, careful hands were exquisite.

"It's a wonder," he declared, pushing his plate a little aside so that he could lean on the table and watch her lovely face, "that when you were left alone like that, after being taken care of always, you didn't make a mess of things."

She smiled at him briefly.

"I did make rather a mess of things," she told him in her deep, shaken voice.

"A man?" he asked; and was instantly sorry for the question.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "That was unforgivable nerve. I don't mean to ask you anything that's too personal!"

She said, "I can tell you a little about it. Yes, of course the—the mess was a man. Isn't it always, with a woman?"

"Did you love him very much?" Greg asked.

He felt a queer thrill, waiting for her reply. It was slow in coming; the beautiful eyes were thoughtful, the mouth drooped a little.

"I *thought* I loved him," she said after a moment. "I—made a mistake. It was rather dreadful."

"Ah, well, you're young," he told her, oddly relieved. "You'll get over it—you have gotten over it. There'll be somebody else."

She shook her head at him, very serious, very honest.

"Oh, no," she told him flatly. "That sort of thing is over for me."

"That," Greg declared, laughing, "is nonsense. But in the meantime," he went on with a boyish eagerness that was quite charming, "you and I are going to be friends, aren't we? I hope we are."

"You've been terribly good to me," Ann assured him. "Don't think I'll ever forget it."

"But I don't want gratitude," Greg remonstrated. He reached across the table, laid his hand over hers for a moment. "I get gratitude a thousand times a day," he declared. "I want friendship from you.

"You're an unusual type of girl, Ann," he went on thoughtfully while her heart pounded to a suffocating rhythm; while all the room whirled about her. "I knew it when I saw you that first time. I liked you then."

"I don't see how you could like me!" Ann whispered.

He gave her a humorous, deprecating glance. The waiter was beside him; the intimate, pleasant hour was drawing to an end. Greg took out his leather bill fold, paid for the lunch, got up to come around and help Ann on with her shabby coat.

"I didn't mean to bring that up. I'd forgotten that was a sore subject," he told her, lifting her worn fur about her rosy, beautiful face.

"Everything that wasn't pleasant in that interview has been forgotten," he assured her. "I've been wanting an opportunity to tell you. You're a good workman, a fine sport. When Mrs. Wallace gets back and things straighten out, your duties won't be so varied; but in the meantime I want you to know you've been making good.

"Miss Harris likes you, old Mamie sings your praises. *I* like you tremendously, Ann—I can call you that, can't I? We're going to be friends," Greg declared.

SOMETIMES it seemed to her that her world was brighter, more delightful than any world belonging to anyone else. Other women wore magnificent furs and pearls, were driven through the slippery, frozen February streets to the theater, spent in ten minutes more than she earned in weeks of hard work.

They were beautiful, sought after; they stayed in bed till noon. There were wardrobes full of expensive, exquisite gowns for them, trips to Paris, to Miami.

Ah, but they couldn't come into the splendid m o d e r n apartment house where the Greg Wallaces lived and step into a life and be whisked up, up, up to the very roof, under the very stars!

They couldn't take it for granted, coming in out of winter twilight, that they might press a cold, fresh cheek against a little boy's dark head. It was Ann, Ann, who could do that; Ann who could whisk up the stairs to her own room and her own hot bath and her delightful supper tray and a book! It was Ann who sometimes got into simple evening dress and came downstairs for dinner and a game of cribbage with the kindest man, the best man in all the world.

Greg had discovered that she played cribbage and played it well; he had been as excited as a boy about it. He had an incessant round of engagements, of course; days passed when she only met him in the hall, coming in to change and go straight out again. But then, suddenly, Mamie would appear at her door, beaming and important, with the news that Mr. Greg was eating in tonight and wished Miss Smith would eat with him and give him a game afterward in the drawing room.

Mamie was delighted that Mr. Greg had somebody to keep him company. Hooking Ann into her plain dark frock with the becoming neck and the crisp, transparent cuffs that made her wrists look so slender, Mamie would announce that Mr. Greg was better off at home than "racketing around town with goodness knows what kind of women breathin' on him and gettin' lipstick on him and whatnot."

Encouraged by Ann's young laughter, she might enlarge on the subject.

"Missus Wallace off there in Florida! She'd better be thankful he's got someone decent and good around the house to take his mind off the chorus girls that's ravin' an' stravagin' through the streets."

Once Ann remonstrated:

"Mamie, Mr. Wallace isn't the kind to play around!"

"Any man is the type," Mamie declared darkly, "that's left alone six months out of every year."

ANN had called him Greg for many days in her heart before she actually said the word. When she did say it at last it was unconsciously, simply, on a day of winter twilight.

They had gone walking in the park. Greg had come home early, to find her working in the library and had insisted on her coming out; it was glorious, he said, not cold at all. Ann, scrambling into coat and hat, had not needed the rouge that she put on her thin cheeks; her mouth was a crimson winter rose, her eyes dark stars.

They walked fast, fast, while the fading daylight lasted. The street lights flashed on at last, the red sun sank in glory across the Hudson River. Greg caught her hand, and they ran, shouting and laughing like children, slipping and sliding on the icy path.

"Oh, Greg — *stop!*" Ann cried,

breathless and panting. "Stop, or I can't live. I'll never get home!"

They stopped, gasping; presently they went on again, the big man slowing his steps to hers. Ann, glancing sideways at him, watched his profile; he had fallen silent; the gayety had gone out of his face, he looked tired. She had called him by name, spoken of home to him—she might be his, he might be hers, she thought suddenly. They might be going through the thin, cold wind to their own place, their own little boy.

And it was then that it came to her in a great blinding flash what had happened to her. She had been thanking the Fates that had sent her under his roof, to peace; now she knew that she had not found peace after all.

Greg! What had he not come to mean to her? It was on the chance of seeing him that she got up every morning with a song in her heart. It was Greg's kind face that she remembered the last thing at night. It was because of Greg that she had been so happy.

She had thought that her good job, her kind employer, the baby to play with were enough for her. Now she knew suddenly that they were not enough, now while the hot blood ran so madly through her veins.

They had turned into Fifth Avenue. Traffic was thick, and Greg took her arm. She felt every separate finger pressing into the soft flesh above her elbow; felt it with a thrill that was almost pain. There was actual vertigo in his smile, in his least word to her.

When he left her in the hall of the penthouse, she stood quite still for a long moment, actually a little dazed with emotion. This was unbearable, she told herself; this was more than she could bear.

She went up the stairs slowly, slowly, on leaden feet. The baby was going to bed, and she went in to hold him for a few minutes. He knew her well now and shrieked with delight at the sight of her. Miss Harris, completely won over to the tall, quiet girl who was so willing to be useful, had taught him a few words. He knew Ann's name and said it elaborately, over and over, beating at her face with his soft little fists.

"Yan. *Yan.* Yan!"

"Love your Yan!" Ann whispered into the fat, powdered neck.

He put his arms up instantly, gave her what she characterized as a "bi-i-g hug!" Ordinarily, just that would have been enough to lift her heart to happiness, but somehow tonight it stayed a stone in her breast.

"But I can't, I can't be feeling this way about Greg!" she said out loud when she was in her own room, alone. "I can't be loving him this way. Why, he'd drop dead if he knew how I felt; he'd be disgusted with me. He's a married man and his wife is coming home in two days. I didn't want to feel this way ever—it *can't* be Greg!"

No use, no use. Ann ran the hot water into the tub, got into her old bathrobe, was warm and rested and clean when her tray came up. She propped a book on her little table and tried determinedly to read.

But the words did not make sense to her. Her world was reeling about her, all her pleasant, comfortable world that she had been so happy in.

"But I must get over this!" she said, shocked at herself. "It's hopeless, I know that. Why, what would I be like if I worked my way in here, fought my way in—yes, stole my way in—and then made a fool of myself over the man who trusted me? What could I ever be to him but a trouble? He's been

so good, such a good friend to me. How would he feel if he knew I was getting silly, romantic notions about him?"

No use to reason with herself; there was nothing reasonable about this feeling that had taken possession of her. What had it been—the touch of his hand on her cold hand in the park, the winter sun shining into his eyes? What had so suddenly awakened her?

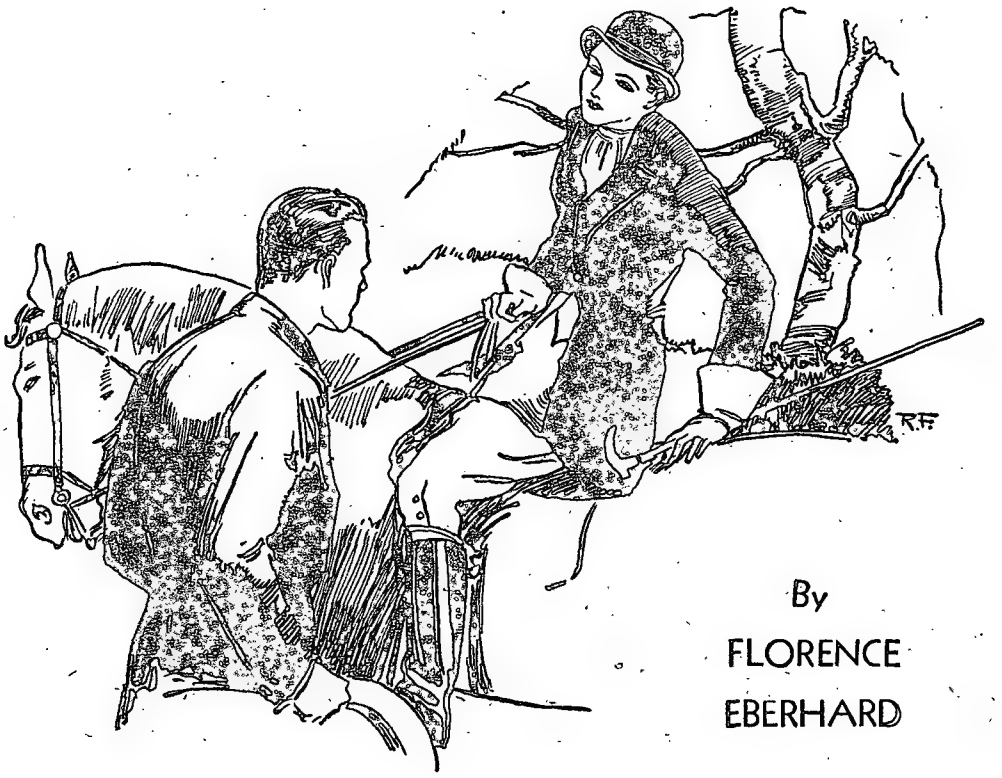
The big house settled to quiet; the chimes in the lower hall struck eleven, struck twelve. It was past two when Ann got out of bed and went to her open window. In the frosty night the stars were shining; the wind was a knife at her breast, but she did not flinch from it.

She knelt, her arm on the sill, her face pressed against her thin young hand and prayed wildly, despairingly, for guidance.

"I ought to go away, God, but I can't. I can't leave my baby again. You know how I suffered before. Help me now. Don't let this terrible love that Greg doesn't want, that I don't want, ruin my only chance to be with my little boy!"

To Be Continued

HERE'S THE AID TO
FEWER COLDS...
VICKS VA-TRO-NOL
• A FEW DROPS UP EACH NOSTRIL •
HERE'S THE AID TO
SHORTER COLDS
...VICKS VAPORUB
•JUST RUB ON THROAT AND CHEST•
Follow VICKS PLAN for better CONTROL OF COLDS
Full details in each Vicks package



By
FLORENCE
EBERHARD

Dark of the Moon

She was doomed to the bitterness of loving a man whose pretty compliments were his stock in trade

THEY met on the last day of the year. Ann thought that was peculiarly fitting, for as soon as she knew who the handsome man was, she understood that their acquaintance must end as swiftly as the dying year.

Their acquaintance began abruptly. Ann was cantering along the bridle-path when a flutter of paper scraps flew before Comet's nose. Comet was a spirited horse with an aversion to having things fall out of a clear sky in his way.

He reared on his hind legs, plunged forward. And Ann, who had been thinking about George Meldrum and wondering whether she should decide to marry him, was taken unaware. She hit the frozen ground with a dull thud.

The next thing she knew she was in a man's arms. They were strong arms and cradled her gently. She looked

into a face of the kind sculptors love to model. It was as finely chiseled as if some skillful hand had worked with loving care on each feature.

The result was a masterpiece. And he was much more than merely handsome. Proud and strong, even arrogant, with dark eyebrows of an upward slant over dark eyes that held deep concern.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

Ann looked at the blue backdrop of December sky, the red candles of the ash trees burning vividly against it. She looked again into his face and knew a moment of perfect beauty and peace.

"Perfectly all right," she said.

He helped her to her feet. She was taller than average, with the long lines and slender grace of a thoroughbred, but she had to look up to him.

They stood for a moment in silence, these two young people, dark eyes gazing into gray ones and conveying a message that was more direct than words.

"I apologize for throwing my letter into the path of your frisky horse," he said. "Do you think it's safe to ride an animal like that?"

Ann smiled. And when Ann smiled her face, attractive in repose with its ash-blond hair framing features of classic regularity, was like a painting come to life.

"Quite safe. The number of people who sit on fences throwing torn letters on the breeze is strictly limited," she pointed out laughingly. "I'm Ann Stafford."

She waited to learn who he was. The town and the country houses surrounding were filled with visitors at this season. She assumed him to be a holiday guest, and she wondered a little that she hadn't met him in the round of festivities.

Instead of taking the lead she gave, he said, "Ann's exactly the right name for you. It conjures up the image of Princess Ann, cool and serene and lovely. Always lovely."

A delicate rose color stained the girl's face. She wasn't accustomed to such directness, even when spoken too gravely to give offense, nor to the frank ardor that shone in this man's eyes. She was embarrassed, and yet glad that he thought her lovely.

It seemed to her that her life was just beginning; that the twenty-two years she had lived were as nothing compared to the fine, sharp thrill of this moment. Ann had had her normal share of suitors, but with each one she had thought, "This is not the one. I must wait."

Now she was glad, looking into the fine face of this man, that she had waited.

"WELL, I'm glad you approve of my name," she said, concealing her emotion under a gayly casual manner. "It's a common one in my family. I'll be disappointed if yours doesn't suit you. It should be something out of the ordinary, rather dashing and bold."

His dark brows slanted upward. "Is that the way I impress you? I'm not like that, really! I don't usually go around telling girls two minutes after I've met them that I think they're beautiful. Seeing you, I'm willing to believe that I've never met a beautiful girl before."

His voice was low and thrilling. Ann had the most absurd idea that if he opened his arms she would go into them without question.

At the same time she realized that he was fencing expertly, delaying telling her his name. Her conventional train-

ing came to the rescue. She turned toward Comet.

"Thank you for picking me up. Goodby."

He hurried after her, offering his hand to help her into the saddle.

"I wish you wouldn't go," he protested boyishly. "I wish I knew we would meet again."

Ann smiled slightly. Surely she had met him halfway? Why didn't he tell her who he was?

"We probably shall," she answered casually. "It's a small place."

A shadow wavered over his expressive eyes. "You may not want to meet me again when I tell you who I am. The name is Lindsay, Nick Lindsay. Does that make a difference?"

Ann went red, then white. It made a great difference. Everyone in town knew that name, unfavorably. Wealthy Mrs. Carrington made a point of flaunting her young escorts.

"I can't marry," Meta Carrington always said, explaining the attractive young men who came to town to squire her about, "so long as my husband left that ridiculous will, forbidding a second marriage. But there's nothing to prevent my having a good time, and I intend to have one!"

Ann knew from her brother, who was cashier in the bank, that Mrs. Carrington paid handsomely for her good times. The young man previous to this one had collected twenty thousand dollars before he moved on.

She felt sick—sick with shame that a man who looked as fine and straight as Nick Lindsay should be one of a long line of dancing partners.

Gigolo! The word crashed through Ann's mind. It fell across her shoulders like a whip, flaying her for responding to his charm.

"I see that you recognize the name," he said quietly. "Please don't believe all you hear about me."

She made no reply. She struck Comet across the flank with her open hand and rode off without a second glance at Nick Lindsay. *Charming!* Of course he would be. Men of his sort developed the knack of pleasing women with pretty compliments.

BY the time Ann reached the big, old-fashioned house where she and her brother lived together, her first blaze of anger had cooled into a mist of regret and overshadowing sadness. She went straight to the library in search of her brother.

Ann always thought that if Tom had been alone, much that happened afterward could never have happened. She would have told him about her meeting with Nick Lindsay, and Tom's contemptuous attitude would have strengthened her own contempt.

But he was not alone. He was bending over Jeff Carrington, who was sprawled full length on the divan. He was trying to persuade Jeff that a pick-up was what he needed.

"Don't want," Jeff said, pushing the tomato juice away. "Won't take."

Ann moved forward, taking the glass from her brother's hand.

"Come on, Jeff, take it for me."

His head lolled away. "Not even for you, Ann," he said thickly. "Just wanna rest a little while. Wanna see the old town again and my stepmother; my dear, dear stepmother. She—" The remainder trailed off in an unintelligible blur.

Ann stared with pitying eyes on the flushed face and rumpled clothes of the man who had been her friend since childhood. She was remembering him as he had been in the days before his father disinherited him in favor of the

attractive stepmother, and started him downhill.

Everyone liked and pitied Jeff now, though some people condemned him as a weakling for letting his disappointment ruin his life. Ann and her brother belonged to the opposite camp, the ones who condemned the elder Carrington for surrounding his son with every luxury and then leaving him to shift for himself.

"When did he come?" she whispered to Tom.

"I found him at the club and brought him here. Poor devil!"

Jeff opened blue eyes. "Poor devil," he repeated thickly. "Tha's right. Five million for Meta. One dollar for Jeff, 'cause Meta was a smartie and tore up dad's last will. I know."

Tom covered him with a blanket. "Try to sleep, old man," he said gently. "You'll feel better after a while."

"Not the money, y'understand," Jeff persisted. "Hurts that my dad would treat me like that. Well, Happy New Year!" A few moments later he was snoring lustily.

Tom drew Ann out of the room, closing the door behind them.

"Nothing we can do for him now," he said. "He'll just have to sleep it off."

Tears gleamed in Ann's eyes. "Did you see his shoes?" she asked softly. "I can hardly bear it. Tom, do you suppose there's any truth to his story that his father made a later will?"

"Oh, yes," Tom declared firmly, "there's no doubt of it. Foster and Dickinson drew it up. In the last will, he left one-third of his estate to Meta, with no second marriage restrictions, and the rest to Jeff. But that will wasn't found. Meta said she knew nothing about it, except that she had heard her husband say one time that he intended to destroy it."

"Do you think she destroyed it herself?" Ann asked.

Tom shrugged. "There would be a strong inducement, certainly, when the first will left everything to her. That one was drawn up after Jeff and his father had a bitter quarrel over Meta. I don't believe old Jeff had any intention of letting it stand. The proof of that is that he did draw up a second will. I've always supposed they quarreled again and that he destroyed it in a rage."

Ann sighed deeply. "Poor Jeff. I think he's telling the truth when he says it's not so much the loss of the fortune as the idea that his father would treat him that way, which hurts."

"I do," Tom agreed promptly. "He detested Meta from the day old Jeff married her, and it's gall and wormwood to him that she won out."

Tom drew out his watch, whistled. "I'll have to rush to get dressed, go for Jean, and be at the Baileys' dinner party by seven. We'll meet you and George at the club around ten. If Jeff comes to, fix him up with some of my clothes and bring him along."

ANN watched him take the steps two at a time. She adored this only brother, ten years her senior, who had tried to take the place of both father and mother to her.

Perhaps it was just as well that she hadn't told him about Nick Lindsay. There was no need to worry him about so trifling a matter.

For the incident *was* trifling. She had met a man for whom she might have cared. She had learned immediately that the situation was impossible. That was all; a candle lighted in mem-

ory of the old year and promptly extinguished.

But Ann was extremely quiet at the hilarious cocktail party which she and George Meldrum joined early in the evening. She felt curiously depressed, wondering why people made such a fuss about ushering in a new year.

Years were pretty much alike. They flowed on in even rhythm, one little different from another: winter, spring, summer, fall.

As they drove toward the country club, George commented on her mood.

"You don't seem like yourself tonight."

"I'm worried about Jeff," Ann returned, knowing perfectly well that wasn't the entire truth. "He came in this evening, down at the heel, bitter. I feel so sorry for him."

"Jeff is to be pitied in a way," George agreed. "But I wouldn't waste too much sympathy on him. Some of the rest of us have made good without having an inheritance handed to us on a silver platter."

The smugness and superiority in this speech aroused Ann's resentment. She knew he was thinking about his own case.

With no backing from his family, George had worked himself up to a responsible position in a factory.

The expertly tailored clothes he wore, the clubs he belonged to, the fine car he drove, were all tributes to his own initiative and effort.

Ann recognized his achievements, but she often wished that he wasn't so well aware of them, himself.

"But if one's always had a silver platter and then has it jerked away, it's different," she said sharply. "Besides, it isn't the loss of the money which hurts Jeff. It's the idea that his father cared more for Meta than for him."

George laughed. "It's never the money. It's the principle of the thing!"

She made no reply, wondering whether all successful men had George's annoying trait of thinking they knew everything.

He put his arm about her shoulder. "We won't quarrel over Jeff," he said good-naturedly. "I can think of a pleasanter subject. When are you going to make up your mind to marry me, Ann?"

She had felt sure that he would ask this question tonight. He proposed at regular intervals as if he set the date in a notebook: "Memo: Ask Ann to marry me."

She shrugged away from his arm, wondering why she was so wayward and critical tonight. She had liked George enough to go with him for almost a year. But whenever he mentioned marriage, instinct rebelled.

She answered as she had answered him before: "I like you very much, George. I don't love you."

"More people than you realize marry because they like each other," he returned. "Liking and mutual respect are a pretty solid foundation for marriage. Romantic, flaming love that sweeps everything before it doesn't happen very often in real life, I fancy."

She had listened to this argument before, had almost come to believe it. But now a dark face came between her and George's, and a deep voice said, "Ann suits you perfectly. It's cool, serene and lovely."

Oh, love could happen in real life, to the lucky ones! She was sure of that now.

"You're wrong, George," she said.

He wheeled the big car into the country club drive.

"You'll see it my way some time," he said cheerfully.

ANN left her wraps in the dressing room and, slim and lovely in white satin, followed George to the table on the far side of the room where Tom and Jean Ellis were already seated.

For this gala night the large ballroom had been converted into a cabaret. Tables lined the walls, leaving the center of the room cleared for dancing.

The floor show was on when they entered. Tom spoke to his sister under cover of the music and tap dancing.

"I went back to the house after dinner," he said. "Jeff had gone. I hope he doesn't come here."

"We can make room for him if he does," she answered quickly.

"That's not the point." A frown appeared between Tom's eyes. "In his present mood Jeff's likely to create a scene. His stepmother's here with her —er—latest squire. Don't look, Ann. They're just opposite us, and they're looking this way."

Ann's face went hot; a tremor swept along her nerves. To keep her gaze from straying she began an animated conversation with Jean Ellis. Nick's presence created a problem for her. She didn't care to speak to him, yet she wouldn't cut him.

The chorus trotted off and the orchestra swung into the latest dance hit. Tom and Jean excused themselves, and after a slight hesitation George asked Ann to dance.

They inched their way along the crowded floor, through the maze of brightly colored balloons and serpentine crêpe. When the music stopped they were face to face with Meta Carrington and her escort.

Ann had no need to decide whether to speak to Nick Lindsay. His dark eyes met hers briefly, looked away with no sign of recognition. Mrs. Carrington, hanging on his arm, resplendent in white velvet and rubies, greeted Ann gushingly.

"Hello, darling! Lovely party, isn't it?"

She was a woman in her middle forties, with wings of dyed black hair framing a white, pointed face. There was a hard, metallic quality about her, and a suggestion of foxy cunning which had always repelled Ann.

She returned the greeting civilly, however, and Mrs. Carrington turned to her escort as if to introduce him. George took hold of Ann's arm and firmly propelled her on.

"It's a darn shame," he said, "that the club committee can't censor their guest list more carefully."

Ann made no reply. She might have reminded him that since Jeff Carrington Senior had given the country club to the town, a house committee could scarcely exclude his widow or any guest she chose to bring.

She felt too weary to argue.

The noisy, tiresome evening wore on. She watched him dancing with Mrs. Carrington and thought that no man in the room could equal his handsome, distinguished appearance.

She watched him as he sat at the table, smoke curling before his dark face. And she approved of his manner toward his companion. It was not so fawningly attentive as that of his predecessors, yet he was perfectly courteous.

Afterward, Ann realized that she had spent too much time watching Nick Lindsay that night. She was deaf to conversation at her own table. The laughter and noise left her own quietness untouched as she struggled with the riddle of his entanglement with a shallow, hard person like Meta Carrington.

Thin and far-away, the clamor of bells and sirens announced the coming of the new year, and in the club pandemonium broke loose. The drummer banged out a steady rat-a-tat-tat; balloons popped; cheers and laughter filled the room.

A man jumped up, holding his glass high.

"Everybody up!" he shouted. "To a bright New Year!"

Ann rose, her glance meeting Nick Lindsay's. There was recognition in his eyes now. With a faint smile, he raised his glass as if proposing a toast for them alone.

Ann lowered her glass, untouched. Regret, fine and persistent as autumn rain fell on her spirit. The New Year might have been bright, indeed, had he been any other man in the world.

TOM was going to Jean's for dinner the next day, but Ann had declined all invitations.

When she went to the kitchen to prepare a scratch meal for herself, she discovered that the housekeeper had left the electric refrigerator stocked for a holiday dinner. Ann popped the turkey into the oven, set the table for two, and began calling her friends in an effort to locate Jeff Carrington.

But no one knew where he was, and after an hour she gave up trying to reach him. She was seated at her lonely table, a book propped before her, when the doorbell rang.

Maybe Jeff had got her message and come, after all! She hastened to the door. But it was a boy who stood on the porch, holding a long white box. Ann slipped the cords as she carried it into the dining room.

Rosebuds, cream-white against glossy green leaves, nestled within, and with them there was a small sealed envelope. The name Nicholas Lindsay and the scribbled lines beneath danced before Ann's eyes.

> Will you be as understanding as you are beautiful, Princess Ann? I should like to have a hearing. I'll be at the same place at the same hour today.

Ann told herself that she wouldn't think of going. But after two hours dragged by, she told herself that there was no reason in the world why she should give up her daily ride. If Nick Lindsay should be waiting on the bridlepath, she would merely nod and go on.

She wore a riding suit of hunter's green which brought out the fairness of her complexion and the pale gold of her hair. As she cantered along, bright color burned in her cheeks.

Just at the spot where she had met Nick Lindsay the day before, she saw his tall, erect figure beside a parked car.

He came toward her, hat in hand, and Ann reined in.

"I got your note and the flowers," she said breathlessly. "I haven't come to meet you. This is the only bridlepath."

His eyes held a slight twinkle, although his mouth remained grave.

"I'd like to talk with you, now that you are here. But it's difficult to talk with a lady on a horse."

Ann's gray eyes met his fully. Her nerves were shaking, but she said the thing she knew she must say.

"I'm afraid there's nothing for us to talk about," she returned simply. "I'm a conventional person. My family and friends are all conventional people. I think that covers the situation, Mr. Lindsay."

A faint smile touched his handsome mouth. "You're telling me in a nice

way that I'm—an outcast. I understand. But does it follow, because Mrs. Carrington has had other young men hanging around, and has lavished gifts on them, that I'm like the others?"

"No," Ann granted. "But people are bound to think it."

"I don't care what your town thinks," he cut in swiftly. "It's just a small community, and a rather unimportant one as the world goes, at that. But I care immensely what you think about me, Ann! I shouldn't want you to think I'm a gigolo."

Her face flooded with color. "Then why are you here?" she demanded bluntly. "Meta Carrington is years

Always before when she met a man she had thought, "This isn't the one. You must wait." Now she was glad she had waited

older than you. She can't marry again without forfeiting her inheritance."

His eyebrows slanted upward. "You'd rather consider me a fortune hunter than a gigolo?" he asked. "I'm not that, either! I haven't any intention of proposing marriage to Mrs. Carrington."

He laid his hands close to hers on Comet's neck. "Ann, I can't say very much," he told her with strange earnestness. "There are long roads in life, sometimes, and winding ones, and some that one can't help following.

"My feet are set at present on a winding road. I don't know the turns it will take, but I know it will end some day. If you could take me on faith, Ann, until that day, I'd be very proud —and very humble."

His voice played on her heartstrings, even though she realized that he hadn't really explained his connection with Meta Carrington. She was content to enjoy the moment for what it was worth.

It was worth more to her than all the safe, stodgy years that had gone before. She accepted the hand he offered to help her down, and strange thoughts went through her mind — strange thoughts for Ann Stafford who had always been so conventional and careful in her conduct.

Nothing like the magic attraction this man held for her had ever happened before. She knew swift fear that it might never happen again.

He smiled down at her. "Can that horse of yours find her way home alone? We could go for a drive."

Ann hesitated.

"Let me say what you're thinking," Nick Lindsay spoke abruptly. "You don't want to be seen with me. I'll take a side road and I know a little inn where we can stop for tea."

ANN'S double life began in that moment. There were two Anns after that drive through a blue dusk with Nick Lindsay. He proved to be an ideal companion, witty, interesting and so correct in his conduct that she felt utterly safe with him.

There was the Ann who went through the usual routine of her life, serving on committees, entertaining friends at small dinner parties, going to dances with George Meldrum.

There was the Ann who contrived to meet Nick Lindsay at odd times, for an hour before dinner or an hour afterward. There was no regularity to their meetings. Sometimes he telephoned and Ann would have an engagement which she couldn't break; sometimes she would be free, waiting for a call which wouldn't come.

But in spite of difficulties, they managed to meet several times a week, managed to salvage hours of shimmering delight, strange hours cut off from the reality of life, with no talk of the past, no mention of the future.

Tacitly they understood that only the present existed for them.

"Look, Ann! The new moon. Make a wish over your left shoulder."

Full of the moon, with white radiance on a snowy world, with exotic white flowers blooming on dead bushes along the roadside. On a night like this he kissed her for the first time. He stopped the car. When he took her into his arms it seemed to Ann that the world stopped for that moon-mad moment.

The whole story of her pitiful love was in her response. She tipped her head back to receive his kiss, pushed him away, then drew him back.

"I love you, Ann," he said. "I've loved you from the first moment I saw you."

She drew his head to her shoulder so that he wouldn't see the tears that filled her eyes. She loved him with all the strength and beauty of first love, with the bitter knowledge that when she said goodby to Nick Lindsay, she would be saying goodby forever to love.

For she knew she must say goodby to him some day. The hour glass was set for them. Inevitably the sands would trickle through. Although she took the hours Fate granted her with fine gallantry, never mentioning Meta Carrington's name to him, Ann never lost sight of the other hours of his days.

There would be a reckoning. At times, guessing how steep the bill would be, she would make firm resolves not to see him again, for there's no sense in letting any bill run too high. But he was in her blood like slow fever, or like sweet poison which she took, fully aware of the danger.

Then dark of the moon. As Ann hurried along the wind-swept street that last night to the corner where Nick was waiting, she was unusually light-hearted. She had invited Jean Ellis to dinner and slipped out as soon as the meal was finished. Tom and Jean wouldn't mind, even if they noticed that she stayed away for several hours.

Instead of the scraps of time she usually spent with Nick, they could have the entire evening, and could go, perhaps, to some place where there was music.

"We've never danced together, you know," she said, explaining her plan to him.

He turned, dark eyes filled with regret. "There are so many things we haven't been able to do," he said slowly. "Ann, I'm sick about this, but I must be back in town by eight."

There was no reason why she should have taken the disappointment so hard. There had been other evenings when he had had to be back and she had known why.

But tonight as they drove along the dark countryside, rebellion and shame mounted to a swift decision in her mind. She couldn't keep on like this.

New moon, full moon, dark of the moon, the cycle was ended, and if she had any pride or common sense she would end with Nick Lindsay.

"Don't be angry," he said. "If I had known you would be free, I'd have managed differently."

"I'm not angry," she returned, but her voice shook. "How could I possibly be angry when I went into this with my eyes open? I've known exactly what I was doing, though I've been surprised enough at myself for doing it. I've known I'd come to the end some time."

His head jerked around. "When two people love each other as we do, Ann, there is no end."

She steeled herself against his voice, against the unhappiness in his eyes.

"I love you, Nick, when I can close my mind," she said deliberately. "That isn't always possible."

He made no reply. He drove several miles in silence, then turned into a lane and backed, heading toward town again.

"You've been wonderful, Ann," he said in a queer, shaken tone, "so wonderful that I'm ashamed to hurt you as you've been hurt. We have known the bitterness of love, but some day, my dearest, we shall know the sweet. I promise you."

She looked at his profile, clear-cut and white against the darkness. And pain, sharper than she had known any human being could suffer, throbbed

through her mind, her heart, her nerves. If he had offered then to give Mrs. Carrington up, she would have been willing to follow him to the ends of the earth.

But he made no promises, asked for none. He was putting her off with evasions and expert dodging of the issue as he had before. Her decision to break off was strengthened by her outraged pride.

They approached a turn of the highway where an outlying cross street joined the main road. Nick took the turn far on his side, but the car that darted out of the blind street had swung too far to avoid a collision.

There was a loud crash, a moment's silence in which Ann sat dazed and shaken. The car that had struck them backed, swung up the hill out of sight.

"Ann," Nick murmured, "people will come any minute. You must get out of this."

His voice sounded thick.

"You're hurt!" she cried wildly. "I won't leave you! What do you think I am?"

He caught hold of her hands. "I'm all right. I had my breath knocked out against the steering wheel. I want you to go, Ann." He added: "I don't want anyone to know you were with me."

She caught her breath sharply. Without a word she opened the door of the coupé, stumbled out as lights flashed on porches along the street, as people came running out to investigate the cause of the crash.

Ann turned down the side road. Meta Carrington came first with him, she was thinking, and what Meta would think counted the most.

Ann whispered to herself over and over, like a child learning a difficult lesson, "I must never see him again."

Everything was finished now, without the agony of a long drawn-out goodby.

WEARILY she climbed the steps of her own home and opened the door. She went quietly through the hall, relieved that Tom and Jean hadn't heard her come in. She was on the stairs when Jean's voice rang out, sharp with protest.

"You're so utterly foolish where Ann's concerned, Tom! Why should we put off our marriage until she's married?"

"Because I feel it's the right thing to do." Tom's tone was regretful and yet stubborn. "I promised father that I'd always look out for Ann. It wouldn't be right to leave her alone in this big house and I wouldn't want her to live with us."

"We may wait forever."

Tom laughed. "I might share your pessimism if I didn't know how attractive Ann is. But she'll get married. It's only a question of time."

Ann stood quite still. She had never dreamed that Tom was waiting for her to get married. She started toward the library to argue him out of his absurd idea, then stopped. Dear as Tom was, she knew how hard it was to change his mind when he had set it on a certain course.

She tiptoed upstairs, seeing that she must manage better than to embarrass them by letting them know she had overheard. She sat in the darkness of her room, completely dismayed by the jumble of her life.

It was pitiful that Tom should put off his own happiness until she was married, when she could not marry the only man she would ever want.

It seemed hours afterward that the

telephone rang. In spite of her firm resolve never to see Nick again, excitement throbbed along Ann's nerves. She bumped against furniture in her eagerness to reach the phone.

Two voices answered, Tom's from the downstairs phone, and George Meldrum's.

"When did you get in, Ann?" her brother demanded.

"Just did," she returned airily. "Now will you please get off the line and let me talk with George?"

He laughed, hung up. "I thought we might take in a movie," George suggested.

Ann jerked the chain of her bedside lamp, stared at the clock, unable to believe that it was not quite nine. So many hours until bedtime, so many hours after that before she could sleep.

"I'd like to," she said.

She saw only snatches of the picture. Instead she saw Nick walking through the gorgeous drawing-room at the Carrington home, to meet Meta, and jealousy like flame consumed her.

She heard only fragments of what the actors said, listening instead to the drum of her own thoughts. "I knew it would be like this. I must not complain."

Afterward over sandwiches and coffee in the Colonial restaurant, George asked suddenly, "I've been commendably patient and persistent, haven't I, Ann?"

She propped her chin in her hands, gray eyes searching his carefully.

"Why do you want to marry me, George?"

A startled expression spread over his pleasant face. He laughed slightly.

"Why, what a question, Ann! I'm very fond of you."

"But you're not wildly and unreasonably in love with me."

He hesitated. "I'm not the kind of fellow who falls wildly and unreasonably in love," he admitted finally. "I care as much for you as I would care for anyone, Ann. I think we'd get along as well as most couples, if you could get rid of some of your romantic ideas."

She switched off the light in the booth. "I love another man deeply," she said in a low voice. "But he's a man I couldn't marry, even if he wanted to marry me, which he doesn't. We've broken off."

"Is he married?" George Meldrum asked. Then he added before she could answer. "Never mind! I don't want to know so long as you've broken off."

He reached across the table, his hand closing over hers. "Ann, why not marry me if this other is impossible?"

"Why not?" her rebellious mind echoed. She would have to marry some day, and she liked George Meldrum as well as she could ever like any man. Nick had been different, but he was a page in a book she had closed.

She was a trifle mad that night with jealousy and pain and loneliness.

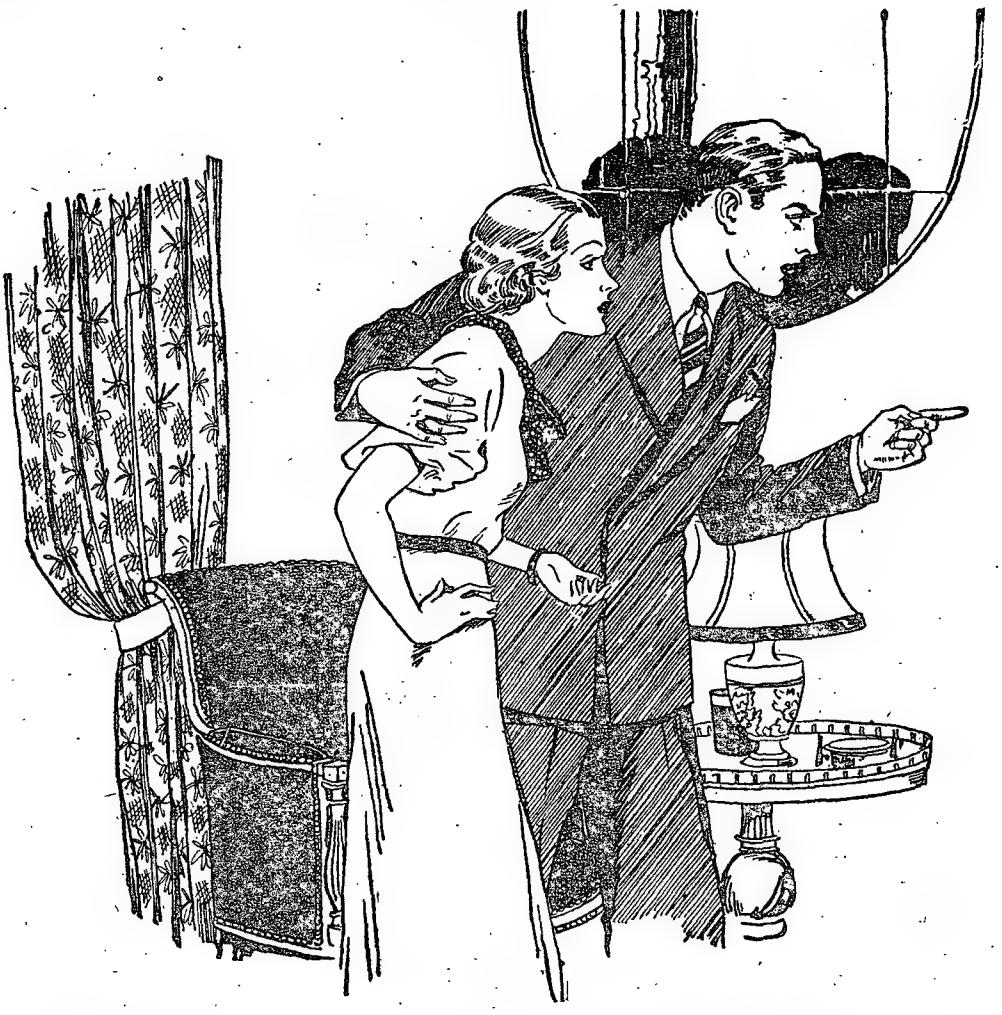
"If you won't feel that I'm cheating you to offer so little," Ann said calmly, "I'm willing to marry you."

"NASTY bit of gossip going the rounds," Tom said that evening at dinner. "It seems that Babs Felton has been going, on the quiet, with Mrs. Carrington's gigolo."

Ann stared at him, dumfounded. "Oh, no!" she cried. "I don't believe that."

"I didn't either, at first. But different ones have seen her in his car. They were in an accident a few nights ago, but she got away before anyone came."

Ann sat very still. Babs Felton re-



Tom put his arm around Ann, saying, "I can't imagine my sister caring seriously for any man who's interested in you. Please go!"

sembled her enough to pass for her at a distance. They were both tall and blond, and their fur coats were very much alike. They had often mentioned it.

Someone had said, "I think I saw Babs Felton with Nick Lindsay." And the next one had added to it, "I saw Babs Felton with Nick Lindsay." That was the way false rumor started.

"They're wrong," Ann said steadily. "I am the one who has been seeing him."

There was a moment's tense silence. The grandfather clock in the hall seemed very loud. Tom stared at her, wild-eyed.

"You don't mean that! You're crazy!"

"It was I," Ann reiterated. "I'll have to set people straight, of course. I can't let Babs bear the brunt of this."

"If you think you can take him away from me, you'd better think again, my child!"

Her brother pushed his plate aside, stood up. "If anyone else had told me this," he shouted, "I'd call him a liar! I don't believe even you. Ann, tell me it isn't true!"

She lowered her eyes before the stark hurt in his.

"I'm sorry, Tom. It's true."

He walked away from her then, words flowing out in an angry torrent.

"Where was your self-respect, your pride? I must have bungled the job of bringing you up pretty badly that you would sneak out to meet a fellow like that! A gigolo! A sponger on the folly of a silly, wealthy woman!"

Ann winced. "Not your fault. You've been the most wonderful brother a girl ever had. I can't explain, Tom. My heart went out to him."

"Bosh, physical attraction."

She shook her head. "It was more than that," she said in a hushed tone. "When I was with him I was alive, and yet at peace. He's more than attractive. He's quick-witted and intelligent. You'd like him."

"Stop it!" her brother shouted again. "I don't want to hear about the fellow." He brushed his hand across his eyes. "Sorry; I didn't mean to yell at you, Ann. But this was pretty much of a shock. You've always been so level-headed and sane, and I've tried to shelter you—"

She went to him then, eyes searching his anxiously.

"Tom, dear, I know you don't want to hear about him. It's ended now, anyhow. But let me say this much. Whatever else he may be, he's a gentleman. He's treated me as you would treat Jean."

Her voice blurred in a sob. "I mean he's respectful and chivalrous, more so than most of the men a girl meets. I know the story may sound cheap to other people, but I want you to know that it wasn't cheap, to either of us."

His arms went about her. "I know, Ann. But it's galling to think of the tempest in a teapot this will start. But, of course, it wouldn't be cricket to keep silent."

She smiled up at him, glad that things were straight between them.

"Scarcely cricket to let an innocent person be blamed," she said steadily.

WHEN she started for the dance at the club that night, Ann had made no definite plan as to the best way to end the scandal about Babs Felton.

But it happened that a group of her friends were discussing the affair when she entered the dressing room.

"He's marvelous looking," one of the girls remarked. "But even so, I don't see what Babs meant."

Ann turned to face them. "You're talking about Nick Lindsay, aren't you?" she asked. "I'm glad, for it gives me a chance to do some necessary explaining. I'm the one who's been seeing him. You'll be doing me a big favor if you correct the mistake people have made."

She walked away while they were still stunned into complete silence. But as the evening wore on she realized that they must have recovered the power of speech soon after she left them. She knew by the curious, speculative glances cast her way that the story of her connection with Nick Lindsay was spreading like wildfire.

For herself she didn't care. She had danced and she was ready to pay the piper. She was even glad to let everyone know that she loved Nick. But her brother's set face and the way he hovered close all evening as if wanting to protect her from criticism, hurt unbearably.

George Meldrum showed no inclination to protect her. Ann could judge, almost to the minute when he must have heard the news. He left her at the end of one dance, a beaming, possessive suitor. He returned for their next a cold, critical judge.

"A fine mess you've got yourself into," was his grim comment.

Conscious that people were watching them, she smiled as if he had said something pleasant.

"Oh, yes, George. Certainly."

He glared at her.

"It's scarcely a laughing matter."

"Nor one to discuss with the multitude listening," she returned calmly.

He kept silent then until they were on the way home.

"You get yourself in a nasty scandal," he said, "and you run to me for cover. I don't like it."

She laughed nervously. "I had no idea a scandal was in the offing when I agreed to marry you, George. I told you I was deeply in love with another

man. You jumped to the conclusion that he was married, and you didn't care. I thought at the time that you were curiously broad-minded."

"I didn't know it was public scandal," he retorted. "I thought it was some mild flirtation. But plenty of mud will be thrown now and some of it will stick."

"We haven't announced our plans," she pointed out. "If you think it won't do for an up-and-coming young man like yourself to marry a girl whose reputation is tarnished, I'm willing to release you."

"I don't like your attitude," he shot back. "You seem to think you're above criticism. You're a Stafford and a member of a pioneer family, but you may find that won't pull you through."

That she loved another man and had met him secretly didn't matter, but being found out mattered a great deal. Ann couldn't agree with this point of view.

"Consider yourself free, George," she said levelly. "That ought to solve the problem."

SO far as her broken engagement went, Ann had no regrets. It had been a crazy idea to try to forget one man by marrying another, anyway. But she had wanted to put Nick Lindsay forever beyond reach.

She had planned to say when he called, "Oh, I'm engaged now, Nick. Hadn't you heard?"

Instead, several evenings later, she answered, "I can't see you again, Nick. That's all over."

"You don't mean this, Ann!" he protested quickly. "I would have telephoned before but I've had a nurse here in the apartment. I had a rib broken the night that fool crashed into us."

Her heart rose to her throat. She had been sure he was hurt, and all these days she hadn't known. Her thoughts flowed out to him in a stream of yearning, and it was with difficulty that she managed to keep emotion out of her voice.

"I'm sorry to hear that. But I haven't wondered why you didn't call. I thought you understood what I said that night."

"I understood that you looked on our relationship as ended," Nick returned. "But I haven't, Ann. To me it's been something that will last as long as I do. I want to see you. I've got to!"

Her fingers curled around the telephone receiver until the nails showed white. Desire hammered along her nerves in sharp taps of pain.

"I can't, Nick. Circumstances made it necessary for me to tell my brother about us. I've promised him that I won't see you again. Please, please, don't call me again!"

She hung up quickly before his voice could batter down the flimsy defenses she had set up against him. She had wanted love and she had taken it. Never had she dreamed that the aftermath would be like this, a cold, thick fog closing over her.

She found it impossible to continue the life that had been so pleasant before. She stayed more closely at home, counting off the long, idle hours like a sick person who thinks he'll feel better on the morrow.

She was at home the afternoon a shiny black limousine drew up in front of the house and a uniformed chauffeur climbed out to help Mrs. Carrington alight.

Mrs. Carrington was evidently in a nasty mood. Her eyes, cold and hard in the painted mask of her face, met Ann's.

"I suppose you know why I've come to see you," she said.

Ann motioned her caller to a chair, hating the theatrical quality in the older woman's pose, the supreme bad taste which had brought her here.

"I'm not surprised that you've come," she said coolly.

"Then it's true!" the other rasped out.

"If you're talking about Nick Lindsay," Ann answered, "I'd better tell you right off that you have no right to question me about my private affairs."

Mrs. Carrington tipped her head against the back of the chair. Silver fox furs made a dramatic setting for her white face and red, triumphant mouth.

"I have a very good right," she asserted.

Jealousy flamed in the girl, destroying caution and pride and good manners.

"You can't marry him!" she declared hotly. "You're bound by a will. I'm not!"

Meta Carrington's smile faded. "I wouldn't be too sure of that, my dear."

"I can't quite see you throwing away a fortune," Ann said.

Her caller rose. "At least you've told me what I came to find out. You have been seeing Nick Lindsay. Fine business, I must say, Ann. But if you think you can take him away from me, you'd better think again, my child!"

"I suppose I do seem like a child to you," Ann returned smoothly.

At this juncture Tom stalked into the room. With one arm flung defensively about his sister, he faced Meta Carrington.

"I can't imagine my sister's being seriously interested in any man who's interested in you," he said. "Please go."

WHEN the door had banged behind Mrs. Carrington, Tom turned to Ann.

"What did you mean by giving her the impression you might marry that fellow?" he demanded. "Before I'd let you make such a mess of your life, I'd—I'd kill him!"

Ann knew that he wasn't making an idle threat. For days she had been considering the idea of seeing Nick for one last time, and laying her cards on the table. She had an inheritance, not to be compared with the Carrington fortune, but enough to allow them to be married and leave Fairfield.

"If we have only one year," Ann had thought, "it would be worth it."

Now looking into her brother's set face, she realized the folly of this planning. She had to think of Tom—Tom who had built sleds and doll houses for her when she was little, who stood ready to do anything in his power for her now. She almost envied girls who could say with lofty assurance, "My life's my own!"

Hers wasn't. Not entirely. So she didn't tell Tom the crazy idea that had been in her mind when she talked with Meta Carrington.

"Jealousy, Tom," she said, hiding her face with her hands. "Do you know what it's like? When she sat there, so sure of herself, so possessive—"

He drew her into his arms. "You'll get over him, Ann. Some day you'll despise him. Don't torture yourself like this, honey. Put him out of your mind."

Put him out of mind. Forget that you're wounded and sick. Go your way as if you were a well and happy person.

Ann made the attempt without much success.

One of the minor annoyances of

these hard days was the readjustment of her social program, made necessary by the break with George Meldrum.

They had accepted, for instance, an invitation to Betty Dowling's birthday dinner and on the morning of the party Betty telephoned to say that George had sent last-minute regrets.

"Nice fellow, George," was Betty's ironic comment. "I'm glad you're rid of that stuffed shirt, at least. He'll find that your friends will stand by."

Ann thanked her. "But I'll drop out of the party. It will be easier for you to find a couple than an extra man."

"The extra man is already found," Betty came back promptly. "Jeff Carrington's in town, and cold sober. He'll call for you."

ANN dreaded going downstairs that night when Jeff arrived. But if he had heard anything about the Nick Lindsay affair, he gave no sign.

The glance that swept over her held only warm friendliness. "You certainly manage a snow-princess effect to perfection, Ann!" he said admiringly. "Blondes should always wear white for evening. Will you tell me why most of them go in for green or blue?"

Jeff was looking much better, neatly groomed and in a more cheerful frame of mind. The dinner party was a cheerful affair, composed of people who had known each other since childhood. And everyone seemed trying to show Ann, as Betty had said, that they were standing by.

The conversation was reminiscent. They talked of schooldays, of rides to old Joe's for fried oysters after a football game, of gay picnics in bygone summers. Looking around the circle of smiling faces, Ann felt some of the tightness of her heart relax.

For the first time in weeks she could face her life with courage. Friends would help—friends like these. She would entertain and be entertained; she wouldn't be too lonely in the big old house.

She had finally persuaded Tom that it would be absurd to postpone his happiness on her account, and his engagement was to be announced soon.

"I'll be a nice old maid," Ann thought, "with a cat and a dog."

At that moment Jeff was called to the telephone. She paid no attention to the conversation until she heard one word. Nick. Her plans for a safe, sane future crashed in a thousand fragments. Nick. The old heartache swept back, doubly strong.

She couldn't understand why Jeff should be talking with Nick Lindsay, and so far as she knew, there was no other Nick in town. Her glance met Jeff's inquiringly when he returned to the dining room.

His eyes gleamed with excitement. "Listen, folks," he said tersely. "I just got some big news. I don't know whether it will mean anything financially, for it may be outlawed, but that's not the point."

"Will you stop babbling and say what you mean?" Betty demanded.

Tears stood in Jeff's eyes. "Dad's will has been found! Meta found it among some rubbish in the attic, or so she says, and turned it over to the lawyer. My personal opinion is that she knew where to look, but I'm too darn happy to harp on that."

Ann rose, her voice drowning out the chorus of exclamations. "That's marvelous, Jeff. That's the best news I've heard in a long time. Who called you? I heard you say 'Nick.' Was it—Nick Lindsay?"

Jeff nodded. "Nick Lindsay, the

best friend a fellow ever had. He came to Fairfield to try to get some line on the missing will. I know what you've all thought of him, and I'm mighty glad to have this chance to set you straight."

Ann couldn't speak. She could hardly hear what Jeff was saying as he continued.

"I met Nick in New York in November. He was on a vacation from his engineering job in Canada. To make a long story short, he fished me out of the gutter one evening, listened to my tale of woe, and planned to do something about it."

Ann didn't wait to hear any more. She ran to the hall, caught up the first coat she found, threw it over her shoulders.

"Hey!" Jeff shouted. "Have you gone crazy?"

A dozen voices answered him. "Don't you know?"

Ann opened the door, banged it behind her. She waded ankle-deep in snow to the parked cars, found one with the key in the ignition, and in two seconds was roaring down the street. Her brain was on fire.

Nick spoke to her in a low, persuasive voice as she drove toward the Gray Towers where he had an apartment.

"Some day the winding road will end. If you'll take me on faith until that day, I'll be very proud and very humble, Ann."

He had tried to tell her that he wasn't a gigolo. As the elevator carried her up to his apartment Ann was sick with terror that she might be too late with her faith. She knocked against the door until her knuckles throbbed and the hollow sound seemed to echo her fear: *too late!*

She couldn't go back to the party. She couldn't go anywhere until she found Nick Lindsay and set matters straight between them. She had no idea where to look for him. Fine, dry snow whipped through the open windows, stinging her face as she drove slowly homeward.

When she entered the rosy darkness of the old house, utter discouragement swept over her. It had been almost a week since she told Nick that she didn't want to see him again. So much could happen in a week. Maybe he didn't want to see *her* now!

SHE held out her chilled hands to the fire in the grate. She was cold, cold to the heart. And then a voice spoke out of the rosy darkness.

"I've been waiting for you, Ann. I've been waiting a long time."

She whirled, saw Nick standing in the angle of the front windows. He came toward her, hands outstretched.

"Nick," she said. "Nick, forgive me."

He took her into his arms, gently possessive. "It's for you to forgive me for keeping silent. It wasn't that I didn't trust you. But sometimes a person's expression gives the whole show away. Kiss me, Ann."

Afterward he drew her down on the divan in front of the fire.

"There are a few points I must clear up," he said. "I don't want you to think I made love to Meta Carrington or deceived her. Perhaps I let her deceive herself, but I was fair enough with her, in word and deed. Do you believe that?"

She nodded, eyes adoring him. "Because I know you're a master at the art of fencing, Nick."

"Not a master," he denied quickly. "A mere beginner in the fine art of diplomacy. When I came to Fairfield

I had no plan of action. I had a letter of introduction to Mrs. Carrington—not from Jeff, you may be sure—and she received me—er—cordially."

His voice hardened and his profile against the firelight grew stern.

"Not a nice lady, Mrs. Carrington," he said slowly. "But, even so, one doesn't fight a woman unfairly. The most I hoped for was an admission from her in an unguarded moment, that she had destroyed the second will. I knew if I could carry that word back to Jeff it would cure the bitterness festering within him."

He made a slight gesture of impatience. "It's difficult, trying to give you a fair picture of what these weeks have been like."

"You needn't try," she said gently. "I know Meta Carrington."

A flush spread over his dark face. "But I wasn't letting her run true to form. That's what I'm trying to tell you, Ann! I was trying to learn something about the will without sacrificing my personal integrity. But the whole effort would have ended in failure, probably, if she hadn't started throwing out hints about a week ago that she wasn't averse to marrying again. Tonight she produced the will, just like that!"

"I can explain that part," Ann said. "A week ago she came here, simply boiling with jealousy. She had heard the gossip about us. I completely lost my temper. I told her she couldn't marry you, and she retorted that I shouldn't be too sure."

Nick laughed. "So that's why she 'found' the will without the marriage restrictions! I'm relieved. My conscience has been giving me a little trouble."

"It needn't," Ann returned stoutly. "She was always loathsome to Jeff. She poisoned his father's mind against him, and nearly succeeded in ruining his life."

He drew her toward him. "We've talked enough about other people's affairs. My vacation is almost over. Will you marry me and go back with me, darling?"

She didn't need to answer in words. She raised her lips to his in utter surrender. A few seconds later the telephone rang stridently.

"Ann," said Jeff Carrington, "you were invited to a party. Do you remember? There are men here who want to shake Nick's hand, and girls who want to kiss him. Suppose you kiss him first and come on over?"

Ann repeated the message to Nick.

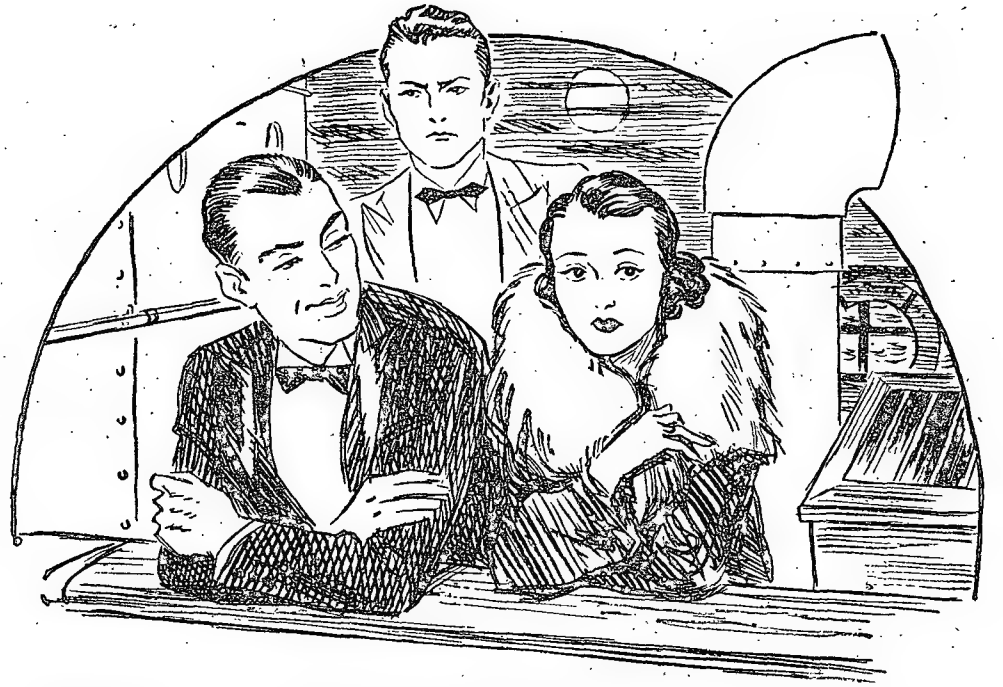
"Tell him we'll come—in an hour or so," he said.

Harp

I DID not know my heart was like a harp
Until one day you came and touched the strings.
A quivering, vibrant note fell on the air,
The hushed and prescient note a young bird sings.

And now Life plays a symphony of tunes,
Sometimes a discord, dim and blurred by tears,
But only you awoke a song of love
That shall forever echo down the years.

—Catherine E. Berry



"I don't blame you for feathering your nest," he said slyly. "Let Randall provide the money. I can still provide—the love"

The Purchase Price

By MARY SEARS

For a thousand dollars she became his fiancée. And then he thought she wasn't worth it, and took back his ring

"SO you're asking *me* to save the honor of the Standish name! Asking *me* to save your brother from the consequences of his own folly."

Cary Randall spoke grimly, and the hard, level gaze of his slate-gray eyes was entirely without any softening light of admiration as he looked at the slim girl across the highly polished surface of his mahogany desk.

Diane Standish's erect shoulders

straightened tensely under the leopard coat; her dark brown eyes met the man's defiantly.

"That's just about it," she admitted coolly. "The money part can be settled later. Somehow every penny of the deficit will be paid back to you, but it's covering the amount of Ted's theft now, preventing disgrace, jail, that matters so vitally today."

Deliberately the man's inscrutable eyes studied the black drift of soft hair waving below the pert geranium-red hat, the aristocratic clearness of the small face so vibrantly alive, the sparkling brilliance of the dark eyes.

"I wonder why you came to me with such a request," he queried slowly, "when you have all around you friends belonging to your own world, your own social class?"

The sneer in the closing words deepened her natural clear color, but the poise of her head was proud. Even pleading desperately for help, she could not lose her natural pride nor forget that she was Diane Standish.

"You were the logical person to come to," she pointed out. "As president of the bank you can fix it so that Ted's theft will not be discovered. Five thousand dollars means nothing to you, and I've already told you that every penny of it will be paid back in time.

"Oh, he didn't mean to steal! You must realize that. He was certain that he had such a good tip on the market, that it would be just taking out the money one day and putting it back the next. It looked simple, making a few hundred dollars. For a boy brought up like Ted, with plenty of money, to be reduced to a meager salary—try to imagine what it has meant to him!"

Diane's eyes were beautiful in their impassioned pleading for her nineteen-year-old brother, but Cary Randall's eyes had become gray steel and his sensitive lips had tightened to a taut, stern line.

"Your confidence in coming to me is superbly insolent," he said, and his voice rasped harshly. "*You* asking favors of me! You who refused me so many favors in the past. You who in the days before your father's crash, never missed an opportunity to hurt me, insult me, and make me feel that I was less than dust beneath your feet. And why?"

He stopped, tossed back his head with its thick, midnight black hair.

"Why?" he repeated. "Merely because my ancestors did not come over in the Mayflower, because no blue-blooded graciousness flowed through my veins. *You* couldn't see anything decent in a man fighting his way up from nothing by sheer grit and ambition alone. You couldn't see that I had honestly earned a right to my pride and honor; that it was a natural right to use my money to fulfill my long desired ambitions.

"No, you remembered only that the name Randall had once been printed over a dilapidated livery stable on the wrong side of town, and that when horses went out of style my father degenerated into a sort of town bum, bewildered and unable to keep up with the march of time. You could see in me nothing but the shabby boy who once delivered milk to your door.

"Remember the night of your birthday party? The orchids I sent you were practically flung back in my face and your insulting words were purposely loud enough for me to hear: 'Gentlemen are born, not made. Money doesn't make a gentleman!'

"And after all that, you dare ask *me* to keep your brother out of jail, thinking all the time that you are granting

me a favor in allowing me to help a Standish. Proud, patrician Diane Standish!"

CARY RANDALL towered above her, his eyes deep and dark in their blazing anger. Involuntarily she shrank from that fierce glance and the high, vivid color of her face faded to the faintly lustrous glow of a magnolia petal.

Mention of that birthday dance made her cringe. It had been the night before her father's crash, a few weeks before his untimely death.

She rose slowly to her feet, hotly resenting the feeling of smallness, of soft helplessness which his powerful physique, his virility, forced upon her. Sheer panic threatened her spirit. He was going to refuse and if he did, Ted would be hopelessly disgraced.

Ted had given her so little time. Not until last night had he confessed his wretched secret, and the bank examiners were due tomorrow.

Desperately she humbled her pride, pleaded: "Don't do it for me. Do it for Ted. Do it for a young boy whose whole life will be ruined if you don't. You are strong, but he is weak. Life has been too soft, too easy for him, but if you'll only give him this chance—"

Cary Randall broke in with crisp, curt words. "I'll give him his chance, protect your precious Ted—if you will pay for it. Not with money. As you said, I've plenty of that. But you can help me where you've put obstacles in my way before. Your name will open doors which my money alone can't open. I want access to your charmed, exclusive circle. You see, what you've scorned as my vulgar ambitions haven't yet been fulfilled."

The girl's face was chalky white. In her shadowed eyes was a stark horror that made him wince. His mouth trembled sensitively, although his gray eyes did not change their grim, mocking gaze.

"Not even for Ted could I do that," she said huskily, red lips pale and drawn. "I couldn't *marry* you."

He shrugged. "And I wouldn't marry *you*," he assured her coolly. "I've my own ideas for a wife, some one warm and human, not glittering, beautiful ice, even aristocratic ice. I'm only asking you to announce your engagement to me—today. To celebrate our engagement, I'll invite a party of your friends to take a Southern cruise in my yacht.

"Play the rôle of my fiancée for a month, and then you shall be free to terminate the engagement. But at no time must you admit to anyone the truth, nor confess that we are only *temporarily* engaged. That will be the purchase price of Ted's freedom."

Dismay chilled Diane. The inexorable quality in the man's voice matched the gray steel in his eyes. He had flung down his challenge. She could take it, or leave it.

All her high pride cringed, shriveled at the thought of linking her name even temporarily with his. He was strong, clever. Only slightly over thirty, he had beaten his way upward to fortune and success. He was the youngest bank president in the State.

But when she had been in her teens he had been in his early twenties, a tall, thin, angular boy doggedly working at any job which came his way. A "no-count-Randall" from across the river, casually remembered as a boy who had brought milk to her door and worked summers in her father's gardens. And she had to announce her engagement to *him!*

To be sure, the gawky, awkward boy had developed into a big, broad-shouldered, almost distinguished-looking man. His hair was no longer a rough tangle, but followed the lines of a particularly well-shaped head in smooth, glossy blackness.

The scorned boy had acquired a confident superb poise but Diane, fastidiously accustomed to highly educated men, "gentlemen" bred to easy gracious life, saw only Cary Randall's sordid background and unlovely ancestry.

Yet how could she refuse? *That* was unthinkable, too. Ted, so lovable with all his weakness, the only close relative she had in the world—now—disgraced, arrested, shut away from all that he loved, behind prison bars. A long, convulsive tremor shook her and she opened her eyes to assent.

And then her eyes rested on the single gardenia pinned to the rich fur of her coat. Stanley's gardenia, Stanley, who with his golf honors and string of polo ponies, belonged so intimately to her exclusive, secluded life. What would *he* think if she announced her engagement to this man?

Stanley's attitude recently had filled her with a hurt, bewildered wonder which she had kept securely hidden in her heart. Stanley, who had danced and played with her through life ever since she could remember, had not definitely asked her to marry him when loss of the Standish fortune swept away her safe, luxurious existence.

Stanley, who had told her in charming words all through her gay, careless girlhood that he loved her, adored her, had not yet begged for the right to care for and protect her, now when she needed protection so poignantly.

She wore his flowers, danced in his arms, waited with wistful eagerness for the proposal of marriage she was sure he intended to make, but if she accepted Cary Randall's grim bargain she could not tell Stanley that she was only "temporarily" engaged. She might lose him forever from her life. That fear twisted her heart painfully. Yet for Ted's sake she must take even this chance.

The silken lashes lifted. Sick at heart, inwardly cringing, indomitable Standish pride enabled her to look steadily into the eyes so mercilessly studying her quivering face.

"I'll do it," she said faintly. All the pride in her being could not keep the shrinking distaste out of her voice. "I'll keep my share of the bargain if you'll keep yours."

Her knees trembled, but the proud dark head was still high as she turned toward the door, the door which Cary Randall didn't open for her. His back was toward her as he gazed out of the window, his eyes somberly brooding, as if he looked back into a bitter past.

THE evening papers printed the announcement of the engagment prominently on the front page. An enterprising reporter had procured pictures.

The bitter humiliation of it bit into Diane's soul. *Her* name linked with Cary Randall's! Angrily she dug the high French heel of her slipper into his pictured face, stamping the newspaper beneath her feet. What a price she was paying for Ted's freedom, for his immunity from punishment!

By the following afternoon Cary's party was assembled on his yacht. No one had refused. Tight-lipped, Diane accepted congratulations and surprised comments, avoiding Stanley's hurt, reproachful looks.

Tonight was Cary's triumph. Tonight she had to wear his orchids, mag-

nificently creamy and large against her black velvet gown, black velvet clinging closely to her slim, alluring grace. She had to stand beside him while he toasted her in champagne cocktails, outwardly smiling, inwardly raging.

A tremor shook her, feeling his arms about her as they danced. He said mockingly:

"If you would speak occasionally, smile as we dance, it would make your engagement to me seem less—er—mercenary."

She knew from his voice that he was smiling down at her, with a smile that no one but herself would know for the false mockery it was. She would not look up, spoke stiffly.

"You're doing it rather well. The yacht is luxuriously equipped and your guests are certainly enjoying themselves."

"All except my fiancée," he murmured.

She shrugged bare, satin-smooth shoulders. "At least we don't have to pretend when we're alone!" she answered.

To her relief Stanley cut in just then, handsome, blond, in irreproachable evening clothes. Gone now was her rigid tenseness. In Stanley's arms she danced with her usual lithe grace.

"I am desolate, crushed," he whispered reproachfully in her ear. "That sudden announcement of your engagement hit me like a blow between the eyes. After all we've been to each other—"

"Let's go out on deck," she interrupted breathlessly. She felt surrounded by staring eyes. Now, when she could not listen to him, was Stanley really going to tell her what she had waited so long to hear, that he wanted to marry her at once?

Outside she drew a furred wrap close about her. Another day and they would be in warmer waters, but tonight there was a damp chill to the air and she was cold with nervousness besides.

Stanley stood close to her as she leaned against the rail, his shoulder touching hers.

"You don't love this fellow," he challenged her. "You couldn't! He's not your kind. Why, just a little while ago you were always making fun of him, ridiculing him. You insulted him to his face because he was presumptuous enough to send a hundred dollars' worth of orchids to your birthday party. Of course, I can't blame you, Diane, for wanting to feather your nest."

Diane stiffened. Stanley was actually being crude, crude as she had never supposed that *he* could be.

"If my income hadn't shrunk," he went on, serenely unconscious of her growing dismay, "I'd have married you myself long ago, darling. But for *us* to exist on the beggarly pittance I have left—it would be ridiculous and impossible, of course."

Diane swallowed hard. She had to, to dispose of a very troublesome lump in her throat. Although until lately she had always had wealth, she did not consider money as all important in her life. She would gladly have married Stanley any time, and accepted necessary economy cheerfully.

But now a little hurt doubt pricked her. Was it really consideration for her that had made him hesitate? Or was it because he himself did not want to economize? If he had loved her enough, wouldn't he have given up the polo ponies, for instance? Would he have been able to keep from at least *asking* her to share what he considered poverty?

He went on eagerly:

"In fact, darling, now that I've thought it over a little, your marrying Cary Randall isn't such a bad idea. I really approve of it. You can't go on indefinitely as you and Ted are, living in that tiny apartment. Now you won't have to worry your pretty head about bills. Randall will provide the money. I can still provide—the love."

Diane had listened incredulously, sick and faint over this ruthless shattering of an ideal. Gone in one crash was her serene confidence that Stanley was her kind, her logical husband.

"I thought, until I saw you in that cad's arms tonight, that you were a thoroughbred. I've been a fool about you, but it's over now!"

Another second and she would have

told him furiously just what she thought of him and his insinuations. But Stanley was suddenly jerked away from her side, slithering dizzily down on the deck.

Appalled, she looked up into Cary Randall's darkly frowning face.

"I apologize, Diane," he was saying smoothly, "for not avenging such an insult to you with a stronger blow. But the gentleman being one of my guests, I didn't wish to knock him out completely. Our most generous opinion must be that too many cocktails prevented him from realizing just what he was saying. Apologize, Stanley, to Diane, for your caddish words."

But Diane did not wait to watch Stanley swaying dizzily to his feet. Sobs of mortified shame and anger catching her breath, she fled to her stateroom.

Tonight she was blind to the exquisite beauty of its luxurious furnishings. In what a contemptible light had Stanley shown himself!

The shock of losing a treasured ideal oppressed her heavily. Stanley was no longer the man whom deep in her heart she had been certain she would marry one day, and now she felt terribly alone. Her father had failed her. Ted had disappointed her—and now—Stanley. The familiar secure foundations of her old life had crumbled away, leaving her bewildered.

Her face flamed as she recalled the cutting scorn of Cary's words, but she could not completely quell an unwilling spark of admiration for the clean strength that had put Stanley down on the deck so neatly.

NEXT morning Stanley was abjectly apologetic.

"I guess those champagne cocktails were stronger than I thought," he told her ruefully. "Guess I didn't know half what I was talking about and probably deserved that sock on the jaw Cary handed out to me. What a wallop he can hand out! If you plan on getting him mad, better throw up a safe line of defense first."

"Forget it," Diane said shortly, turning away her head so that he could not see the hurt in her eyes.

She knew, though, that she herself could never forget. Stanley had not been drinking heavily, as he now pretended. He had known perfectly well what he was saying and had meant every word.

However, seeing Cary coming toward them, she smiled at Stanley and began to talk to him gayly. Cary must not guess how disturbed she was over last night's episode. She hoped fervently that he would not stop, but he did.

"Good morning, Diane," he said easily, smiling at her in her pretty yellow frock with the admiration an engaged man might be expected to show in his eyes. "Missed you at breakfast."

Diane stiffened, resenting furiously his cool, familiar tone, the possessiveness in his attitude.

"I never breakfast," she informed him coldly. "Merely orange juice and coffee in bed."

"I'll learn your habits after a while," he answered.

He was so cheerfully assured that she hated him more intensely than ever.

With a curt nod Stanley moved away, unpleasantly conscious of Cary's amused glance resting on the dark bump which had risen on his forehead.

Cary's smile changed to a frown as he looked after the other man.

"I like your friends, with the ex-

ception of Stanley Kingsbury," he said slowly. "In fact, I'm enjoying this trip immensely. Rather unfair, isn't it, when *you* are having such a rotten time? That Lou Mason, now, is a good scout. Very likable, and not a bit high hat. I danced with her several times last night."

"I suppose," Diane suggested scornfully, though wondering a trifle why she even troubled to be scornful, "she's the warm human type you admire so much."

"She's very nice and friendly," he admitted and smiled suddenly, a surprisingly pleasant smile that irritated Diane because it was so clearly Lou Mason who had brought that look to his face.

"Helpful of me to introduce you to my friends, so that you can select a proper wife," she snapped, knowing that she was being childishly spiteful and yet somehow not able to help it.

"I'm being a bit helpful to *you,* too," he reminded her, and his keen eyes looked deeply into hers.

She had the grace to feel ashamed, felt the hot color burning her face as he walked away.

Before the day was over she had plenty of cause to resent the whole trip. Although the beautiful yacht was fairly large Cary seemed always around. He was not an unattractive person in his white sports clothes, she reluctantly had to admit. The weather was much warmer and the guests in pastel colored frocks and flannels lounged under the vividly striped awnings.

It irritated her unbearably that Cary was putting up such a good front. The food, drinks and entertainment he was providing were above even her criticism. Everyone except herself—and Stanley—was enjoying the cruise greatly.

The realization piqued her and made her distinctly cross. If Cary had been awkward and ill at ease, instead of appearing such a suave, polished host, she told herself she would have been able to glean a little satisfaction from the wretched situation.

Where there had been warmth in her heart for Stanley, there was only cold emptiness now. But she talked, played games with him, even flirted a little. She felt she must because Cary was devoting himself so zealously to Lou Mason.

"Silly little fool not to see how cheap he really is!" Diane raged inwardly. "She's too shallow to see beneath his expensive clothes and polished exterior."

Stanley misunderstood her friendliness, and thought she had forgotten the unpleasant incident of the preceding evening. When she appeared at dinner in a frothy swirl of green draperies, a bright jade green emphasizing her dark rich coloring, fire glowed warmly in his light blue eyes.

He seized the first opportunity to take her away from the dancers, to lead her to a secluded corner of the moonlit deck. The night was balmy and mild, the moon warm and yellow.

"I never saw you so beautiful, Diane," he told her hoarsely. "I'm mad about you tonight. Realizing that you're engaged to another man has aroused the primitive in me."

He would have drawn her into his arms, but she held back.

"The time to make love to me, Stanley, was before I became engaged," she warned him quietly. And she did not feel at all unhappy because she could not tell him the truth of the short engagement!

Her resistance increased his ardor. "I love you." His voice was a husky,

passionate murmur. "You *must* love me. You've been loving me all these years."

He crushed her roughly close, his lips seeking hers. Dismayed, repelled, Diane tried desperately to free herself, fighting silently, lest Cary should come upon them again. But not until he had pressed upon her lips a long, burning kiss that she hated, could she wrench herself free.

SHE hurried below to smooth her tumbled curls and repair the rents in her green dress. Still panting, breathless, she opened the door of her stateroom hating Stanley, hating herself because she had once thought she loved him. She opened the door and stopped in frightened dismay because light was glowing from the small cerise shaded lamp and Cary stood inside.

"Close the door," he said curtly, when she hesitated in the doorway, too proud to turn back or show her alarm.

But she did shrink slightly when he came so close that his sleeve brushed against her. The fierce scorn of his eyes seemed to sink in, reach scorchingly something deep inside her.

"I thought, until I saw you in Stanley's arms tonight, that you were a thoroughbred through and through," he said. "I've been a fool, dreamed about you ever since I was a boy, worshiping you, loving you, looking up to you. That's why I worked and slaved, why I never gave up even when hope almost died and success looked impossible. I wanted money so that I could offer it to you, so that I would feel I had the right to try to make you love me. I *had* to climb up into your world just to be near you."

His voice grated harshly, broke, as if even his iron control could scarcely keep the violence of his feelings in check. Diane had not spoken, could not speak. She stood as stiff and rigid as if he held her there, velvety dark eyes wide and dilated.

"I see now that I worshiped an ideal that did not exist," he went on. "Even when you snubbed me, treated me like dust, I still loved you. When you came to me, begging me to save your brother, I would have given you anything, freely, but I made this bargain, not for the cold-blooded reason I gave you, but because I hoped that if I could keep you here with me, you'd change, feel differently toward me, forget old prejudices and dislikes. I dared hope *this* might be a way of winning you.

"But now I don't want you. Engaged to me here in the midst of my guests, you let that contemptible cad make love to you and hold you in his arms. Tonight, when I saw him kissing you, something very precious and wonderful died within me, something so strong that it has carried me all these years up from sordid, poverty-stricken boyhood—to this."

Vehement protests trembled on the girl's lips. The truth was ready to burst out; the reason for her disheveled curls, the long, limp length of green chiffon hanging limply from one shoulder; the truth that she had hated Stanley's kisses and had tried frantically to free herself.

But the cold sternness of the man's face, and the steel of his eyes, froze the words on her lips. She could not humble herself to plead, force upon his understanding the fact of her innocence. The deep, wincing hurt of outraged pride kept her still. If he could believe her so contemptible, let him believe it! If he could hate her so furiously, she would not say one word to lessen that hate.

Roughly he pulled the brilliantly

blazing diamond from her engagement finger.

"You are breaking our engagement tonight," he informed her coolly. "You are giving me back my ring. It will be announced to our guests in the morning. The house party is over, too. Tomorrow I'll put everyone ashore, providing transportation of course to their homes. I'll go on alone, and try to forget the dream I've lived for so long —a dream that was too beautiful to be real."

Diane was furious with herself, furious that she was so numb and silent, furious that she could not speak flippantly, flick his pride with her scorn.

He misunderstood the confusion in her face. "Don't worry about Ted," he went on. "I've fixed everything for him and I'll stick by him. When *I* make a bargain, I keep it."

And then before the anger surging through her at this last sneer could reach her lips he gripped her by the shoulders. His hands burned through the gauzy covering, slid along the soft length of her arms to her wrists, drew her compellingly closer, so close that she was swept into his arms without an opportunity to resist.

Powerless to move, she could not turn away from the kiss. Fierce as was that bruising pressure she felt the rigid tenseness strangely melting from her being. To her surprised, dazed wonder she felt no sickening recoil.

There was fire on his lips, a clean, true, burning fire. A tingling ecstasy that certainly was not hate and just as certainly could not be love, surged through her in a dizzying, sweet tide. Relaxed, limp, it was only by a sheer desperate effort of her will that she kept her own lips from responding to the fire of Cary's.

One strangely exalted moment like none other she had ever known or dreamed of and then he pushed her away; the hot blaze in his eyes went cold and dead.

"You owed me that," he told her grimly. "One kiss for all the dreams and love I've wasted on you through long years. Strange that I should take that long-dreamed-of kiss *now,* when love has turned to—hate."

THE door closed violently behind him. Diane sank weakly into the nearest chair, feeling bruised and shaken as by the fury of an actual storm. The finger from which he had pulled the ring still smarted. Strange that the finger looked unpleasantly bare now when she had so hated the ring as a symbol of his possessorship.

There was a queer emptiness inside her, too, an unnatural numbness. Why was she not glad, fiercely glad and relieved that the hated farce of this engagement was over; that, after all, she had protected Ted's honor so easily?

Yet when she looked into the mirror hanging against the smooth satinwood paneling, looked at her pale, drawn face framed in disorderly misty dark hair, the velvet blackness of her eyes brimmed suddenly with tears.

"Fool!" she vehemently told that wan reflection. "Fool to be always so proud and cold with him! Fool, not to have told the truth, to have lost his love and respect—so completely."

And then for a girl who had hated and despised Cary Randall so thoroughly, who had thought she loathed the bargain he demanded, she acted most surprisingly. She threw herself across the pale blue satin bedspread, with deep, convulsive sobs racking her from head to foot.

She finally sobbed herself into an exhausted sleep. But dawn was a gray

blur before the porthole when a terrific shock that threw her to the floor awakened her. She lay dazed for a second, wondering if she had dreamed in a hideous nightmare that violent jolt, until a voice outside her door called urgently:

"Dress quickly and come out on deck!"

Her fingers worked with mechanical swiftness. Although she was still dazed, she was ready in a few minutes, drew her leopard coat over the light wool dress of Chinese red and groped her way toward the deck. She had to grope because the way was unfamiliar and dark without the electricity.

The silence oppressed her, too, the unnatural silence of stilled engines. It was a relief to reach the deck although the guests looked vague and eerily unreal in the ghostly gray light of approaching dawn.

Yet there was no confusion or excitement. Cary, his confident calmness contagious, was saying with forceful assurance:

"It *will* happen sometimes, going aground on an uncharted reef. It was really no one's fault. But the engines are disabled and the radio won't work since the shock upset all the electricity. It's best, we think, for everyone to go ashore in the lifeboats. There is no danger.

"My crew is very good at the oars, and the sea is fortunately very calm. Two, three hours of strong rowing at most, will get you to shore."

He added, his voice ringing with cheerful confidence:

"With such a smooth sea, it would probably be safe for all of us to stay right here until help reaches us. But there's just a possible chance that a storm might blow up, and it wouldn't be so pleasant in that case, with the yacht helplessly grounded, at the mercy of the storm."

The crisp, clear tones sent a tremor through Diane. How strong and confident he was, how naturally he commanded any situation! She still felt no fear, only a dull sense of surprise that the cruise was to end so abruptly, like this.

No one argued Cary's decision, and there was no panic. Lou Mason was giggling nervously.

"Such a thoughtful host, Cary! Even providing a real thrill that we'll get a kick out of describing at next week's parties."

The others appeared to share Lou's view of the situation. This adventure would be a real thrill in their sophisticated existences.

Already the small crew was helping the guests seat themselves in the two lifeboats. Stanley, a pale, jerkily nervous Stanley, tried to pull Diane in beside himself but with shuddering revulsion she broke away and climbed into the other boat.

Then, just as the boats were about to be lowered, a man called out:

"Cary, you're coming, too? Surely you're not staying here, alone?"

Diane, with a startled leap of her heart, saw now that the tall, straight shadow a little distance away was Cary, heard him say quietly:

"I'm sure there's no danger. You'll be sending help to me soon. I really prefer to stay on the yacht."

Diane was trembling. Cary left here *alone!* Although he said it was safe, he would not let the others stay, and there might indeed be a storm. Someone beside Diane said quietly, admiringly:

"Real grit in that chap. He knows these two boats are just comfortably filled now, without him."

SUDDENLY Diane's heart almost suffocated her with its heavy pounding, as she made a desperately daring resolution. The very last second had come. The name of every guest had been called and answered.

Diane slipped over the side of the boat, unnoticed in the blurred light and last minute tenseness, slipped to the deck and drew a heavy piece of canvas over her.

Almost smothered, she dared not move, held herself motionless until she could no longer hear the faint halloo of voices and the metallic click of oars. Then, cautiously, she raised a corner of the canvas and looked out, saw no one.

Sheer panic almost paralyzed her. Supposing at the very last Cary had gone, after all, and she was here *alone?*

Then she saw him, tall and shadowy and still indistinct in the faint light, but really there, strong and calm and amazingly reassuring, a few feet from her.

Quietly she stood up, and then such a violent trembling seized her that she could not move. What would he say when he saw her? Would he be terribly angry, even more angry perhaps than when he had flung himself savagely out of her stateroom?

And what would she say to him? She did not even understand just why she had felt she had to yield to an overmastering impulse to stay with him; did not know why it had seemed absolutely impossible to leave him here alone.

Then he saw her, crossed to her in swift strides.

"You!" he said unbelievingly. "Diane!"

Dismay followed his amazed surprise and for the first time she heard alarm in his voice.

"How did it happen that you were left? I called out all the names."

Diane's heart stilled to a deep, contented throbbing. His face was still only a white blur, but there was such acute anxiety in his tone that she knew he did not actually hate her as he had said. Suddenly she was calm and unafraid.

"I was in the boat," she said quietly. "But I climbed out again when I heard you were going to stay. I just couldn't go—and perhaps never see you again, leaving so much unsaid between us. I couldn't bear that you should think of me always as a cheat and poor sport. That night you knocked Stanley down, for the first time I saw him as he really was and—despised him. It wasn't a lover's embrace you happened upon the next evening. I was doing my best to get away from him, keep him from kissing me. And there's something else I had to tell you, too."

Words rushed breathlessly from her lips as if she feared her courage would fail too soon.

"I hate myself because I treated you so unkindly. I was a stupid, silly snob. Just because you were different from all the other men I'd known, I wasn't wise enough to appreciate how fine and splendid you really were. *You* didn't need a family name to make a 'gentleman' of you. You're God's gentleman, a real man through and through."

It seemed symbolical that the gray shadows were lifting, giving way to a growing clear brightness. She could see his eyes now, but she had never seen them like this before, glowing with tenderness and warmth.

"No one ever said anything so wonderful to me in all my life," he told her huskily. "I never dreamed of anything that could be so wonderful as

this—your staying here with me. But, Diane, if anything should happen to *you*—"

"Nothing will happen to me," she said bravely, knowing his fear was all for her, knowing, too, the secret of her own heart at last. "You said yourself, dear, there was no danger as long as the sea remained calm. And look—the sun is rising, and it's going to be a bright, clear day."

She drew nearer, touched his arm timidly, because it took courage to utter the words she was going to say. But being the thoroughbred she was, she had to speak the truth when she really knew it, and Cary deserved the truth.

"Dear, it came to me there in the lifeboat when I saw you staying behind. I knew I—loved you. I would have had to stay even if I'd thought there was real danger. I realized in that minute that I'd rather stay and die with you, than live and try to find happiness with any other man."

"Diane, my darling!" His voice rang with his happiness. It thrilled her through and through, with its exquisite admission of all that she meant to him; its promise of all he was to come to mean to her.

His strong arms drew her close, so close that she felt safe and unutterably content, and his lips on hers were telling her he would keep her so, as long as they both should live.

Lad's Love

I SAW a lad with red cheeks;
My heart awoke to pain;
Something stirred from out the years,
And broke my heart again.
It whispered of an old love.
(Oh, Time, thou are so fleet!)
Lad's love! Where in all this world
Is fragrance half so sweet?

—Phyllis Ward

In the white, white moonlight, his eyes said scandalous things. But she reminded herself that it didn't mean anything.

"This isn't real," she said clearly, "this isle of romance. It's a magic world, and it does something to people"

Afraid to Spend

By ALINE BALLARD

IT never occurred to Noel to wonder who he was or what he did. There was the soft sighing of the wind in the juniper and the deeper murmur of waves, lapping the coral reefs; there were pink pebbles on the beach; there was perpetual sunshine and at night a moon unbelievably big and bland and white.

And he was part of the enchantment.

The island did that to you: separated you completely from reality. You knew that beyond Spanish Point, boats steamed out into storm and sleet; you knew that six hundred miles away in New York, people wore galoshes and had colds. But you didn't believe it, really.

Noel had had a cold herself through November and December and January. That was why she had come to Bermuda. But the cold was long since gone, and still she lingered. In New York the store would be seething with plans for the spring fashion show.

She salved her conscience: "At least I've acquired new ideas for tropical wear." And she told herself firmly, "Next week, Noel, old girl, you really must go back to ice and snow and the business of being Malcolm and Price's best woman buyer."

Business was one reason for running away from the island. He—Tony—was the other.

She had known him for five days. She had seen him before that, of course. Impossible to miss anyone with hair as red as Tony's. You saw him first, and then you heard him.

Wherever there were girls and gayety, his flaming head appeared in the center; his laugh rang out. A different girl each day. She had noticed that, and smiled a little scornfully.

And then one morning, as casually as if they were old friends, he appeared on the secluded little strip of beach she had picked for her very own. She had been drowsing in the sun; she opened her eyes and saw him there beside her.

He was boldly close, his hands clasped around his knees, his body flung back against the length of his arms. She must have been a trifle mad with sunshine; she was never sure just how it happened, but suddenly they were acquainted.

After that, Tony, instead of being seen with a different girl each day, appeared everywhere with "that pretty little brown-haired business miss from New York—the one with the dimples."

And another bright morning—in Bermuda every morning was bright—Noel awakened to discover that in some mysterious fashion this man with the engaging laugh and the impossibly gay hair had come to be a part of the enchantment.

It was then she decided that it was high time for her to go back to New York, where people could think sensibly and everything wasn't all gummed up with glamour.

They were dancing on the terrace, in the moonlight. The air was filled with the poignant sweetness of lilies, dew-drenched and drowsy, with melody, heartbreakingly sweet.

She said, "I'm sailing home on tomorrow's boat."

THE music—it couldn't have been Tony's clever feet—missed a beat.

"Running away?" Tony suggested, when he had picked up the step again.

How had he guessed? She said a trifle defiantly, "There are other things in life besides play."

"You're a little afraid of life, aren't you, Noel?"

She wouldn't admit that, though it was true. "I like my work," she retorted.

"I don't believe you."

"But I do." Her eyes were stormy. "You don't know the real me. I'm a staid, sensible business woman at home."

"You?" Tony laughed, but the laugh caught in his throat. He danced

her down the steps and into the garden, and there in the magic of white light and perfume he found a bench and put her on it.

In the white, white moonlight his eyes said scandalous things. But she reminded herself that it didn't mean anything. Another moon, another girl— Romances bloomed as easily as flowers in a place like this.

With her head flung back, she looked straight up into the star-spangled heavens.

"This isn't real," she said clearly. "It's a magic world, and it does something to people."

"You've said that once too often, young lady!"

He scooped her into his arms. His hair brushed her face, and her cheeks caught fire. Quite suddenly he was kissing her.

It wasn't her first kiss, but she had to remind herself of that, and she couldn't make the others real. Perhaps this would not be real, after. She was angry that the moon could do this to her, and she twisted in his arms, her hands against his chest.

He laughed exultantly. "You've been running away from me for five days. This time you're caught."

"No!" she cried out. But his lips stifled her protest.

Presently he let her go. "So you think it isn't real. Say that—now."

Her breath fluttered painfully in her throat. She whispered, "Tony, please, you're—we're mad."

"Of course, we're mad. Don't you love being mad?" His hands cupped her face. "If we take tomorrow's boat, we can be married on Sunday. Have you any particular objection to being married on Sunday, darling?"

She said, "Silly. We're not going to be married so soon. You'll probably hate me, once we get out of this isle of romance."

Tony ignored the last half of her remark. "It isn't soon," he said. "I decided to marry you the first morning. Before that even, when I saw you riding your bicycle down the road."

Suddenly he was holding her close again. "It is love. With you, too. Say it, darling!" And when she was silent, "I know how you feel. I never dreamed that things could happen like this, either. I've had to manufacture such scenes often enough, but inside I've always laughed."

She drew back, her eyes wide and startled. "You've had to manufacture—"

The sea breeze blew across the garden; she tasted it on her lips, salt like tears, and all of her was cold. But she had to ask: "What do you mean, Tony? What is your work?"

He didn't answer directly. "It is work," he said. "But it's play, too. We're going to have such gorgeous times, darling. No alarm clocks—vacations when other people are busiest—"

"Hush!" She laid her finger across his mouth. "Tell me what you do."

"Make love to pretty ladies, sweet, on the stage. So, Tony Devereaux isn't as famous as he thought he was!" He flung his head back and laughed as if he thought it a great joke.

She looked at him and wondered how she could have been so blind as not to guess. His laugh, his dramatic way of talking, his sweeping gestures—surely she, of all people, should have recognized the signs.

"I don't know your name, and I don't go to the theatre much," she said clearly. "I've been stupid. I'm sorry. I can't marry you, ever. I could never marry an actor."

He noticed only the distaste in her voice, the pain not at all. "You sound as if I'd said, 'racketeer,' not 'actor,'" he said angrily.

"I hadn't thought of it just that way." She laughed a little hysterically. "But aren't you? With love as the racket. You capitalize on other people's feelings, on your own, too. Oh, I know all about it!"

Her voice wavered suddenly. Tony Devereaux, matinée idol. She knew too much about his kind: careless and gay, falling in love and out, scattering emotions and kisses—and if a heart broke, let someone else pick up the pieces. She didn't intend hers to break.

She said, "You think you mean all this now, but you'll meet a new girl on the boat going home and forget all about me. It won't last."

"OH, won't it!" Hands of steel closed on her wrists. His mouth was savage.

Part of her wanted him to go on hurting her, and her face pressed itself closer to his. The tears rolled down her cheeks, hot against their lips.

Then all at once his anger melted. His arms were holding her tenderly.

But she couldn't stop crying. She said, sobbing, "Why couldn't you have been anything else? A plumber?"

He touched her eyes and then her lips with one finger tip. "Poor, frightened Noel. Darling, what hurt you so?"

Even his gentleness had a passionate, dramatic quality. She reminded herself bitterly that it was part of his stock in trade, it went with the profession.

Her voice steadied. "I watched my mother die," she said. "My father killed her. Oh, not with a bullet or a knife, but with Broadway successes. So you see, I do know."

"I see," he said.

"I wonder if you do. It's just that I haven't much faith in love, particularly in the kind of love stage people feel. I decided years ago never to put myself in a position where I could be hurt as my mother was hurt. My father believed you couldn't manufacture emotion without living it. Most actors do feel that, deep in their hearts, don't they?"

"You're telling me!" he said flippantly.

That was because she was hurting him. But she had to finish now.

She made it as short as possible. "He needed to love a lot of women. The last went over the cliff with him. I was fourteen at the time. You should remember Slade Carteret, if you weren't too young for newspapers then!"

She saw remembrance of that other actor in his eyes. But he said, "Stop it, Noel! I'm older than you by four years. Old enough to know that nothing matters but us."

For the moment she was too startled to argue. "How did you know how old I am?"

"And you a business woman!" he scoffed. "By your white teeth, my dear. And the way your lashes curl. Just as I know you love me."

He was the old Tony again, drunk with the moon and something he thought was love; sure of himself and of her—dramatically sure.

Brushing away everything she said. She despaired of making him understand. But she could make him angry; and he would go, then.

She tried it: "We've done two acts rather well, haven't we? Let's call this the climax and end the play gracefully."

Tony furnished the climax. In a

rage, Tony was magnificent. His hair blazed; his eyes were blue flame underneath; his mouth looked as if it had never laughed.

The warmth of the garden vanished; a cold white moon glared down at them.

"You—you coward!" Tony ground words between his teeth; he made up impassioned speeches—or perhaps he had learned them—and flung them at her.

She knew she was a coward, but she wasn't a cheat. He sounded as if he thought she had fallen in love with him purposely. Why, he was the last man on earth she would want to fall in love with. She didn't love him; she wouldn't.

Noel caught fire. "What a pity to waste all this drama," she cried, "with only me for audience! Still, it's been a splendid rehearsal, hasn't it? And I'll come to see you on Broadway."

She left him in the brief, speechless second before his wrath could burst again.

SHE wouldn't see him on Broadway or ever again.

Lying very still in bed, forcing herself to lie coldly during all the long hours while a chalky moon changed into a pink wedge of sun, she told herself that, over and over again.

She told herself, too, that he would forget her and hurl himself with the same intensity into a new affair. It went with the profession. Stage divorces. Hollywood divorces. Love triangles.

Actors' emotions were geared into high. Their kind of love was a rocket; it shot off a few stars and fell to the ground, burnt out. It was gorgeous while it lasted, but love should burn with a small, steady flame.

There was too much talk of love, anyway. People acted as if they thought love all important, as if they thought it the sun and without it the whole world would be quite dark, and frozen.

You could have too much sun. People went a little crazy on sunlight.

She got out of bed wearily and closed the shutters. She was sick of eternal brightness.

This time she went to sleep.

The phone awakened her, insistently loud, a peremptory sound to its ring. That would be Tony. She tried to go back to sleep. The phone rang at intervals all afternoon while she was packing.

It was still ringing when she left her room in the evening to go to the boat. Her luggage had gone. She sneaked out of the side door and into a carriage, avoiding the garden.

All the way to the pier, the horse's hoofs made a hollow clatter—*clop, clop*—and their feet went swiftly.

Lights twinkled on the dock and in the water of the harbor. When the Atlantic got to New York it would be a surly ocean, dark green; not smiling and brightly blue as it was here. But in New York there would be work and sanity.

She told herself that she had acted wisely, but she couldn't feel very proud of herself.

The thing was glamour, of course. The island and Tony. But Tony would be the same anywhere—that much she conceded—the same intense, exuberant and lovable person. But those were the very qualities in him that made the thing impossible.

Her stateroom wore the detached, institutional look of staterooms before sailing. This time there were not even flowers to humanize it. She opened

her cases briskly and began to unpack.

The door burst open, and Tony flung himself through it.

"You can't do this to me!" he raged.

"How did you know I'd be here?"

"I knew you'd run away." There was deadly bitterness in his voice. As swiftly it changed. "I'm sorry. Let's not quarrel."

This was a strangely humble Tony. She laid her hand on his and drew it away hastily. "I am a coward, dear. But look at it this way: I want to keep what we've had."

"You do love me, then?" He bent toward her; he didn't offer to touch her.

"Do I?" she asked wonderingly. "Perhaps I do, now. But I couldn't marry you, never trusting you."

"You're so sure there'd be other women. There have been, of course, but never one I asked to marry me."

"Quite sure," said Noel. "It goes with the instinct to dramatize. I saw so much of that. That's the trouble with actors," she said distinctly. "They're always acting."

"And buyers," Tony slashed back at her, "are always buying, talking values, watching their pennies. It's fun to spend everything you've got, Noel! Can't you see that?"

"No," she returned flatly. "It's extravagant and foolish. And what happens? A girl wastes all her love on one man, and when he's taken all she's got, he begins to look for someone with a fresh supply of currency. And all she has to show for her reckless spending is heartbreak.

"No, sir!" she finished wildly. "When I marry, it's going to be someone who feels the way I do, who spends wisely, not foolishly—a business man."

"So that's it!" Tony cried. "I could introduce you to plenty. My brother, for instance. He's on Wall Street."

"Why don't you?" she asked.

"Bah! Bargaining with love!"

He picked her up, held her in his arms while he kicked the door shut; then swiftly he dropped her on the bed and towered over her.

"What we've had!" he said. And laughed; it was not a nice laugh. "I could do a bit of bargaining myself, but I'm not sure you're worth it. I'm not sure you're worth bothering about at all."

He yanked the door open and closed it very gently behind him. The door's swift, silent closing was like the falling of the curtain when the play is over.

Noel's breath came back, choking her. If she lay on this bed in the corner of her big, bare stateroom, she could not see the island slip away. But she heard, presently, the reluctant throb of the boat, tearing itself away from shore.

There was a discreet tap on her door. It was the steward with a note for her. "Gentleman with red hair give me this for lady in Number 211," he said.

The note was written on ship's stationery. He had been repentent even before he left the boat. Noel smiled at the sprawling letters; a tremulous, misty smile. He had written:

> In a year I'm coming for you— Year be hanged! I can't wait a year. Make it Christmas. We'll be married at Christmas, darling. Eternally,
>
> TONY.

Eternally, Tony, she said to herself. But there was little conviction and less comfort in the thought.

With the note read and the boat on the ocean, everything seemed curiously flat. One day was exactly like another—and not beautiful.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG

"I've simply got to have it," the bride-to-be wailed, "and I've spent too much. But I can't stop."

"Are you sure you won't be sorry afterward?" Noel ventured.

The girl shrugged slim shoulders. "I will, of course, but I'll have had the fun of spending"

THE flatness persisted in New York, though the style show was a success. Mr. Malcolm himself congratulated her.

She said, "Thank you," listlessly, and turned over the resort program, usually her favorite, to Brinkley in sports. Let him choose what bathing suits New York would take on its vacation. She wasn't interested in vacations.

Winter ended. Forsythia bloomed in the park, and after that, stiff circles of tulips.

But there was no spring. Snow and cold, rain and more cold, and then May ushered in summer. A most unusual spell for this time of the year, the papers announced.

There was nothing unusual about it, Noel thought irritably. New York was always too hot or too cold.

The store had become quite suddenly wedding conscious. There were gossamer lengths of veiling in laces; striped trousers and morning coats in men's wear. And in the French room there was a church aisle with models arrayed for a noon ceremony.

The store must think none of its customers did anything in June but marry!

Noel kept out of it all until one morning Miss Lester called her down to consult about a very special outfit. There was the bride-to-be and an older girl.

The older girl had hair as red as Tony's. That was all Noel saw about her at first.

The bride-to-be pounced on Noel gratefully. "Can you fix a color scheme to go with hair like that?" And to her companion she cried laughing, "If you weren't going to be my sister-in-law, Terese old thing, you'd never get into this wedding party."

She meant no one in the church would see anything but that outrageous flaming hair. Didn't Noel know!

She choked back an insane impulse to shout: "Linen-colored Palm Beach suits!" And said, "We'll use an organdie hat with a floppy brim. There's a new shade of yellow—"

They chose and discarded for hours. The red-haired one left. Lunchtime slipped by.

Noel could have let Miss Lester finish, but the bride had caught her fancy. She was so fascinatingly alive and eager.

There was a set of French lingerie, the sheerest black. "I've simply got to have it," she wailed, "and I've spent too much. But I can't stop."

"Are you sure you won't be sorry afterward?" Noel ventured.

The girl shrugged slim, pretty shoulders. "I will, of course, but I'll have had the fun of spending."

Noel laughed. "I might let you return it tomorrow."

She was coming back in the morning to choose a going-away suit. "'You'll find me something nice—you know, awfully swanky?" she coaxed. "I think the going-away outfit's more important than the wedding gown, don't you?" There was a mischievous glint in the blue eyes.

For the fraction of a second, the dimple flashed against the corner of Noel's mouth. "Who's the lucky man?" she said lightly. "I may ask, may I not, since I'm to choose the suit that goes on the wedding trip with him?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? I'm Ruth Beverly. It's Anton Devereaux. You've heard of him, of course. He's on—"

"I've heard of him," Noel said hastily.

HOW soon he had consoled himself! Her Tony, who'd talked of a year being too long. And Christmas was still six months away.

So it had been dramatics, or moonlight, or glamour. It hadn't been real love. She had said that, all along, of course.

"You'll find another girl," she had told him.

But she hadn't believed it. Deep inside of her had always been the hope, the belief, that Christmas would bring Tony back to her. That was why the days had seemed so flat; because she had been marking time, waiting for Tony to come for her.

She found a suit for Tony's bride to wear when she went away with Tony. It had been a leader in the fashion show. It was a gray blue; a swanky suit that cost a tremendous sum of money. But the girl wouldn't mind that. She liked to spend. She spent carelessly. Like Tony.

Suddenly Noel wondered if they were right. Was the fun of spending enough to make up for the heartbreak after? But suppose your heart broke anyway, and you hadn't had anything?

She put the suit on a special rack and told the head of the department, "Show this to Miss Beverly when she comes in tomorrow. I've given her all the time I can spare."

She realized the irony in the words. If time was only all she had given! But she had given her Tony, and now she must even make her beautiful for Tony.

She would not look at her in the blue going-away suit. She stayed stubbornly in her office and did nothing at all for hours; and then desperately, and as a sort of penance, she gathered up beach apparel and tennis dresses and went down to tell Mr. Brinkley that she would help him plan a sports apparel campaign.

One end of the sports shop was a garden. There were flowers, and birds in cages, and tanks of fish. They were ordinary glass tanks with ordinary goldfish in them. But Noel stopped and stood staring numbly. The tears squeezed out of her eyes and began to roll down her cheeks. She dabbed at them futilely with one corner of a jade green beach cape.

And so she did not see the two who came up behind her, or know they were there, until a small gloved hand caught her arm and a voice unmistakably Miss Beverly's cried, "Oh, here you are! The office girl said I'd find you here."

What more did she want? Noel wondered wearily. And then she heard her say: "I want you to meet my fiancé."

The fish swam in mad circles, long, thin ones, fat, bulbous ones. How cruel of Tony! But how like him.

"Miss Carteret," Ruth Beverly was insisting.

Well, she could be cruel, too. Noel spun around. Stopped. The beach apparel slipped to the floor at her feet. The man holding out his hand had *black hair.*

"This is Anton," Ruth Beverly said. "I've been telling him how grand you have been, Miss Carteret."

"But she said your name was Devereaux!" Noel spoke directly to him.

He had picked up the bathing suits and the tennis dress. He said gayly, "In person." His voice was like Tony's.

"They don't call you Tony?" she cried wildly.

"So you've heard of my brother." He laughed. "He got the nickname first. Our benighted parents had named him Edward. Can you imagine

calling him Edward?" The last was to Ruth Beverly.

She said, "Or Eddie."

"No," said Noel. "No, I couldn't imagine anyone calling him that."

THERE were so many names to call him; names he would like. And things to say; not miserable, stingy things, but reckless, loving ones. He was still hers. Not that other girl's.

"Darling," she whispered, "please be home. Tony, please! You like to sleep late." Her hands trembled on the knocker. "Please, God, let him be here." No one answered.

The knocker was a faun. She pounded its hoof hard against the apartment door. A lazy voice called, "Coming."

The door swung away from her. She went in quickly, for she had a frightened conviction that he would be quite capable of keeping her out.

He was still in a dressing gown. His hair flared untidily. He stared at her and said, "Noel."

Just that. She would have to find the words this time. She said humbly, "Will you take me back, Tony?"

"I never had you." His face was stern. But there were hollows under his eyes to give her courage.

She traced a gray shadow tentatively, with her forefinger. The muscle in his cheek twitched, but the sternness did not relax.

"You can break my heart if you want, Tony. It—it wasn't any good as a heart after you left, anyway. Please, Tony!" She put her arm around his neck. "No more bargaining. I want to spend all I've got."

"Say the rest." He was the same dramatic Tony. Arrogant and possessive. But lovable.

She said it obediently: "I love you."

He swept her into his arms. She sighed and crowded closer into their circle. It still didn't make sense, perhaps. But this was completely satisfactory.

Suppose her old heart did get broken. She would have had something. The worth of her spending and more.

But the business side of her still wasn't quite crushed, for she thought, "I must keep him in love with me. That's my job. That way I can get full value."

Tony hadn't kissed her yet. Tony was going to make her do all the giving.

She lifted her face. The dimple flickered against the corner of lips that were soft and inviting.

"Isn't there something that comes just before the final curtain?" she asked wickedly.

"Oh, yes," said Tony. "To give the audience a thrill."

"Well, I'm audience," Noel reminded him.

"You're — everything," Tony said, his voice husky.

Presently he stopped kissing her for a moment. "Sometimes the play ends with wedding bells," he remarked with a great show of casualness.

"The good ones always do," Noel said.

"LUCK IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT"
says Harmony Haynes in our next issue

They Gambled Love

By ALLYN HARRIS

She gambled alone with hearts as chips—and lost. Then Fate handed her a partner in a bigger game

IT was very dark down at the boat landing. So dark that the slender outlines of a girl seemed to be more a shadow than a reality.

She was carrying a bag, and her footsteps lagged with an air of apprehension that belied the tilt of the brave little chin and the steadfast determination in the long-lashed eyes.

"He can't do this thing to me," she told herself to bolster her wavering courage. "We love each other. I won't let him ruin three lives. Bianca can give him wealth and position, but she can't possibly love him the way I do."

And then she paused and looked down at the little white yacht that was moored a few feet out from the pier. It was too dark to make out the name on the side, but she knew that the small craft must be the Whitebird.

At twelve o'clock the Whitebird would lift anchor and sail merrily

away toward Bermuda,, with no one aboard but its young owner, Lieutenant Leigh Donaldson.

The trip was the result of a wager, and the stakes were a great deal more than Leigh could afford to lose. However, Bianca Roberts had drawled: "Heavens, darling, don't worry about the money! I'll pay it myself if you don't make it in the allotted time. It's the sporting thrill of the thing that counts, and as soon as you get back we'll be married."

Jeanie Allen looked somberly at the little boat bobbing about in the water. She wondered if Leigh would hate her for this thing that she was about to do. But the old adage said that all was fair in love or war, and certainly neither Bianca nor Leigh had shown any fairness or mercy in this game of love.

She turned from her contemplation of the river to look toward the Officer's Club, where gay lights twinkled and the strains of the latest syncopation vied with laughter and lighthearted chatter.

Leigh was in there, dancing with Bianca Roberts, who clung to him possessively. He had been engaged to her, even while he had made ardent love to Jeanie.

Bianca had returned from her European trip and established herself in the Donaldson home with the air of one who had a right there. She had greeted Jeanie lightly: "Why, it's the little secretary! Leigh wrote me about you. I'm glad you kept my boy from being lonesome while I was away. I've always said that there is nothing quite so consoling as a pretty little secretary in the home."

Leigh had flushed as his eyes met Jeanie's stricken stare.

"You aren't angry, are you, little playmate?" he had whispered as the slim figure of his fiancée flitted away. "We were having such a swell time together that I hated to tell you about Bianca. I thought you might get virtuous and refuse to play around with an engaged man."

"You told me you loved me." Jeanie had been unable to hold back the accusation. "You made me think it wasn't just a summer flirtation with your father's secretary. You said it was real."

Leigh cast troubled eyes in the direction in which Bianca had gone. His face was flushed beneath its attractive bronze.

"I do love you, Jeanie," he said, hurriedly. "I'm crazy about you, darling. That's why I didn't tell you about Bianca. I didn't want to lose you. But her father is an important figure in Navy circles, and he's working on a big appointment for me. The engagement is purely a business arrangement, dearest. Don't you understand?"

Jeanie shivered slightly in the cool darkness of the night. It was the end of summer—and the end of all her happy daydreams and eager plans for the future if her courage failed her now.

Leigh had got his "big appointment" yesterday. Before his departure for his new post, he was making this adventurous trip which Bianca had thought would be "thrilling and sportsmanlike." Bianca reveled in cheap publicity and glamour.

Jeanie smiled bitterly. She wondered how Bianca would like the publicity that would result from the fact that Jean Allen had made the trip with young Lieutenant Donaldson!

Well, Leigh had claimed that he loved her, and that his engagement to Bianca was a business arrangement.

This was his chance to prove it. If she stowed away on his boat, he would have to marry her.

It was a wild gamble for her happiness. But anything was better than giving him up.

"I can face anything but losing him," she murmured into the dusk. "If he really loves me as he said he did, he will understand."

She clung for a moment to a pile of boxes, stacked up on the pier. Her knees trembled beneath her, and she realized that if she paused one moment longer she would turn back.

Resolutely she grasped her small valise and tossed it efficiently and accurately across the few feet that separated her from the boat. She heard it land with a dull thud. Then, shivering a bit, she made a clean dive into the water and in a few strokes had reached the rope ladder that dangled from the side of the yacht.

Her teeth chattered as she sought the shelter of the little cabin. Everything was dark, and she knew that she wouldn't dare strike a light, even if she could find one.

With stiff fingers she slipped out of the wet clothes that clung to her with icy persistency, and in the gloom of the cabin managed to extract a pair of white duck trousers and a heavy white pull-over sweater from her bag.

Clothed in these nautical garments, she felt her courage return. She realized that it would be nearly two hours before midnight, and, worn out with the mental turmoil of the last few weeks, she lay down gratefully on the small bunk in the cabin.

She felt curiously relieved by the knowledge that she had made her decision and found the courage to carry it through. Only her belief that Leigh loved her, and that beneath his personal ambition there was something really fine and trustworthy, could have driven her to this desperate course. But now that it was too late to turn back, she felt a sense of adventurous freedom.

"A woman has a right to fight for love and happiness, just as much as a man," she murmured sleepily into the pillow. Nestling her black curls more comfortably in their resting place, she felt herself drifting into a comfortably relaxed and exhausted slumber.

"Come, come! You aren't asleep. It's a very pretty pose, to be sure, but no woman sleeps as attractively as all that. And as a joke it's in very poor taste. I don't know who hired you for this bit of foolishness, but I do know you'll be darned sorry you ever got yourself into a situation like this before you're out of it."

Jeanie opened startled eyes. The masculine voice addressing her had broken into her dreams of Leigh, and she fully expected to see the young lieutenant standing over her.

But this was not Leigh! She sat up abruptly, shocked wide awake. This blond young giant standing above her, a lantern in his hands, was a stranger!

"WHO—who are you?" she whispered in a strangled voice.

The man laughed sarcastically and, lifting a huge hand, rumpled his unruly blond hair. "Who am I? Who are *you,* is more to the point! Just what's your game? And what are you doing on my boat?"

"Your boat?" With startled realization, Jeanie discovered that the boat was unmistakably in motion. Rising hastily, she sought the door. "Stop the boat immediately," she ordered. "There's been a horrible mistake."

"I'll say there has," the man agreed. "But it was your mistake, not mine. What's the big idea of planting yourself in my cabin?"

Jeanie turned on him fiercely. "Didn't you hear me say to stop this boat? I—I didn't read the name on it. I thought it belonged to a friend of mine."

The tousle-headed young man gave a mocking whistle. "Oh, I see! Well, it's tough luck, sister. You happen to be aboard the Minnow, and my next stop is Long Island. We've been traveling three hours, and if you'd like to get off and swim, it's all right with me, but I'm not turning around to take you back to shore."

"But you can't do this!" Jeanie whispered, wide-eyed. "I told you it was a mistake."

"The whole female sex is a mistake," the owner of the boat told her, looking at her with somber eyes.

Even in her panic, Jeanie noted the unusual physique of this surly and reluctant host.

"He looks the way the old Vikings must have looked," she told herself with a gasp. His eyes were the coldest blue she had ever seen, and they shone with startling intensity from the deep brown of his skin.

They faced each other curiously in the dim light of the lantern. It was the man who finally broke the silence.

"Tell me about it," he commanded. "I thought at first it was a joke; that someone had planted you here to embarrass and annoy me. But there's something in your eyes that tells me differently. You've been unhappy and frightened, haven't you? Tell me."

He put the lantern on a hook and, without haste or self-consciousness seated himself on the bunk and pulled Jeanie down beside him.

Suddenly Jeanie laughed hysterically. "Oh, it's funny!" she gasped. "After all my planning—all my misery—to get the wrong boat!"

And then she was crying. Crying against a broad shoulder, while a huge hand patted her mechanically and a deep voice murmured an awkward, "Here, here!"

Almost of its own volition, the story poured from her lips. All her humiliation and heartbreak, and her final determination to force the issue by compromising herself with Leigh.

"I'm quite shameless, aren't I?" she asked, childishly, looking at him with eyes that resembled drenched pansies and whose lashes clung together in distracting moist little points.

The man looked down at her without speaking. Finally he cleared his throat. "I think you're rather wonderful," he said.

"And you'll take me back?" she asked.

He shook his head. "I'm afraid not."

"But you must!" Jeanie cried. "I can't stay here."

"Why not?" the man asked curiously. "You were going to Bermuda with this other man."

"But don't you see? I loved him—I still love him. I couldn't let him make three of us miserable. Because he doesn't love Bianca; I know he loves me. I thought you understood. I thought you were going to be kind."

With an air of finality, the man rose to his great height. He seemed to fill the cabin, and suddenly Jeanie was afraid.

"I am being kind," he told her. "From what you tell me, this man is a rotter. I'm going to save you from yourself. I'm going to take you with me."

"What are you going to do with me?" Jeanie asked.
"I'm going to marry you," said the skipper of the Minnow in a conversational tone

"But you can't!" she gasped. "You can't do that. What will people think? What will people say? Don't you realize what you're doing?"

He nodded, and grinned at her sardonically. "You weren't figuring on what people were going to say and think when you planned this thing. Why not look at it that you just have a change in sailing companions?"

"I think you're crazy," Jeanie said.

The blue eyes narrowed at her. "Women are a lot more clever than men," he told her slowly. "I couldn't have thought of a scheme like this myself, but it just happens to fit into a little plan of my own. So consider yourself a permanent guest aboard."

With a movement surprisingly rapid and silent for one so huge, he was outside the door. Jeanie heard the key turn in the lock.

WITH dull horror, she stared at that closed door. What mad plan did he have in mind?

She dropped down again on the hard little bunk and with wide, thoughtful eyes stared through the porthole at the lights that flickered on the distant shore, until at last sheer exhaustion seized her, and she fell into a troubled sleep.

Strangely enough, the familiar figure of Leigh Donaldson was absent from her dreams, and in his place moved a Viking figure with cold blue eyes and broad, comforting shoulders.

She was aroused from this sleep by the click of the lock.

"It's morning and I'm getting breakfast. Want to help?"

For a dazed moment she couldn't quite recall where she was, nor how she had got there. She had been unhappy for such a long time, yet somehow this awakening was quite free from that familiar feeling of blind, helpless jealousy. She felt rested and strangely contented.

"How funny," she mused. "I should be furiously angry and frustrated. Leigh is on his way to Bermuda and, according to my plans, I should have been with him. Here I am, in the middle of the ocean with a perfect stranger, a very bitter and bad-natured stranger, and I feel utterly at peace with the world."

"I've unlocked your door." This time the voice was surly and impatient. "If you want any breakfast, you'd better come out."

"I'll be right there," Jeanie assured him meekly.

She got up and peered at herself in a tiny cracked mirror that decorated a chest of drawers. She frowned at the dark circles under her eyes.

"Those are for the nights you lay awake being miserable over Leigh Donaldson," she told herself scornfully.

She found cold cream and brush and comb in her bag—the bag she had expected to unpack under the admiring eyes of Leigh.

"What a shameless creature I was!" she gasped. "How did I ever get up enough courage to plan such a thing?"

And then the fact that she had got herself into a far more dangerous predicament occurred to her.

"Maybe the reason I'm not afraid is because I've lost Leigh and nothing matters now," she told the flushed and dimpled reflection in the mirror.

But deep down in her heart she knew that a single glance into eyes as blue as the sea itself, and the feel of a comforting hand awkwardly patting her shoulder, had awakened her, forever from the nightmare enchantment that had bound her heart.

"No matter who or what he is, heaven must have sent him to keep me from making a complete little fool of myself," she admitted candidly, and with a final dab of powder on her straight little nose and a last jerk to the white sweater, she stepped out on deck to meet her captor.

There was an awkward little silence as blue eyes met brown. Jeanie wanted to reach out and touch that curly blond head. She saw his eyes scan her face eagerly, and then she found herself watching his mouth.

It was the most beautiful mouth she had ever seen on a man; strong and sensitive, with an odd, cynical little twist to the corners. She felt, almost, as though that mouth was descending upon her own and her own lips parted in a queer little gasp. Then a wave of crimson swept over her face, and she tore her glance away from the blue gaze that was devouring her.

She felt breathless and ecstatic. She had believed herself to be in love with Leigh, but never before had an emotion like this seized her.

"Your breakfast is in the other cabin," the man said, curtly, and the spell was broken. "I've had mine. I got tired of waiting."

She looked at him mutely, but his eyes were turned away, studying the waters ahead.

"I was trying to make myself a little more presentable," she explained, and then hated herself for her tone. Why should she be apologetic? It was his fault that she was still aboard his boat. "What are you going to do with me?" she asked hardily.

The blue eyes returned to her face. This time they were quite impersonal.

"I'm going to marry you," said the skipper of the Minnow in a conversational tone.

"YOU'RE going to *what?*" gasped Jeanie.

"I'm going to marry you," repeated the man.

"And have I nothing to say about it?" the girl burst forth indignantly. "Why should you want to marry me? We don't even know each other's names."

"My name is Ralston," he told her indifferently, his eyes once again on the horizon. "Gray Ralston. But I don't think names are so awfully important, do you?"

"Why, of course, I do," Jeanie parried.

Gray Ralston! The name was vaguely familiar. She tried to remember where she had heard it before, but events had moved too rapidly in the last twelve hours for her to think coherently.

"Well, Miss Stowaway, that being the case, you might tell me what they call you when you're home."

"I have no home," Jeanie said softly. "That's why it didn't seem to matter what I did with my life. My name is Jean Allen."

"Jean Allen." The Viking repeated it as though it pleased his tongue. "And I understand, Miss Jean Allen, from the story you told me last night, that you are a gambler."

"A gambler? I'm afraid I don't understand."

"A love gambler," he said. His mouth curved in a sardonic smile. "You were willing to risk your reputation and all your chances for future happiness in a wild gamble to get the man you loved. You lost!"

"I didn't lose!" cried Jeanie. "I didn't have a chance to prove that I was really the one Leigh loved."

"You lost," repeated Gray Ralston, inexorably. "Fate was against you. Instead of putting you on the Whitebird and giving you a chance to prove your theory was incorrect—because it *was* incorrect, you know—Fate tossed you into my hands and gave you a chance to really gamble."

"What do you mean?" whispered Jeanie. She put up a trembling hand to still the excited pulse that beat in her throat. "And why do you say my theory was incorrect?"

"Because Leigh Donaldson would never have married you, and a little scandal such as you would have created would never have bothered Bianca. She would have laughed at you and married Leigh right under your very nose, and you would have been left to bear the gossip and humiliation."

Wide eyed, Jeanie stared at him. "You're right," she whispered brokenly at last. "You're right. I never stopped to think of it that way. They

are both selfish and self-centered. But how did you know?"

He smiled crookedly. "I'm the man who followed Bianca to Europe and back. She couldn't quite make up her mind whether she wanted to marry me or Leigh. In fact, she was still a little bit doubtful about it last night.

"But I made up my mind I was through! She thought she would keep me dangling around while Leigh made the Bermuda trip. I think the only thing that kept her from throwing Leigh over was the fact that she was afraid you would get him if she did. Bianca is like that."

"And now you want me to marry you," Jeanie murmured. "Why?"

"Because I'm still crazy about Bianca," the man cried violently. "That's why I wouldn't turn around last night and go back. I'm just fool enough to let her play with me until she is tired and then turn around and marry her Navy lieutenant. If I marry you now, I'll be burning my bridges behind me.

"This is a chance to save the pride of both of us. You gambled once, and lost. I'm willing to go the limit, to teach Bianca that she can't play fast and loose with a man's affections. Will you gamble with me, Jean Allen?"

Again blue eyes locked with brown eyes, and behind the poignant wistfulness of the brown eyes there lurked a thrilling resolve.

"I'll gamble with you, Gray Ralston," she breathed.

He held out a huge brown palm that quite swallowed up the little white hand she put in his grasp.

"Partners in a love gamble," said the man.

"Partners in a love gamble," repeated the girl.

"And you realize that it is only a partnership?" Gray asked more gently. "You realize that I won't—that I won't take advantage of our relationship."

Jeanie nodded gravely. "You're a nice person, Gray Ralston," she whispered. "Too nice to be gambling with love."

"I was thinking the same about you, Jean Allen," grinned the man. "But you won't back out, will you?" he asked eagerly.

"No, I won't back out," she assured him.

Reluctantly he loosed the hand he was still grasping.

"We'll head for shore and find a town where we can get married," he said in a matter-of-fact tone.

THE girl's eyes followed the tall form as it went toward the tiny engine room. There was wonder and fright and unbelief in her gaze, but underlying it all there was a strange exaltation that would have puzzled the man.

That exaltation remained, veiled by eyelashes that demurely screened the luminous eyes, all during the simple ceremony performed in the small fishing town where they had anchored.

They were strangely silent as they went back to the Minnow. The atmosphere was vibrant with a poignant sadness.

Stealing a glance at Gray's set profile as he strode along beside her, Jeanie thought wistfully: "He is regretting the bitter impulse that made him reckless enough to marry the first woman that came into his life."

"I am afraid we did a very foolish thing," she said, at last. "We should have weighed the idea, and then turned it down. I didn't realize until we stood up before that nice old minister that marriage is a sacred thing."

"It's too late to think of that now," the man said and increased his stride until Jeanie was quite breathless, trying to keep up with him.

Once more aboard the Minnow she looked at him timidly. "W—What are we going to do now?" she asked.

"We're going back to Annapolis," Gray grinned down at her. "We're going back to Annapolis to present young Mrs. Ralston to Miss Bianca Roberts and Lieutenant Leigh Donaldson."

"B—but Leigh is on his way to Bermuda," stammered Jeanie.

The man fixed inscrutable eyes upon her and gravely shook his head.

"He decided at the last minute not to make the trip," he told her. "That was why his boat wasn't at the wharf. He and Bianca announced to the club last night that they would be married there this evening and leave directly for Leigh's new station by airplane."

Jeanie could feel that he was searching her face for some sign of emotion.

"You knew that last night, and that was why you wouldn't take me back, isn't it?" she asked softly. "You didn't want me to be humiliated by having to stay through the wedding."

Gray nodded briefly.

She came closer to him. "And the story you told me about being in love with Bianca wasn't true, was it?" she persisted with a gentle insistence.

"Bianca was in love with you, but you weren't the least bit in love with her. You came away because she was bothering you all the time, and you were furious at her for putting you in such a position when she was engaged to Leigh. You lied about following her to Europe and back, didn't you? She was the one who followed you."

"How did you know?" Gray asked.

"There was a letter she wrote to you in the cabin, and I read it," Jeanie confessed, unashamedly. "I know it wasn't honest, but—well, after all, I wanted to find out something about the man I was being forced to marry even if it *was* a gamble."

The blue eyes suddenly blazed down at her, and the huge palms grasped her slender shoulders.

"Why don't you ask me the rest?" he demanded. "Why don't you ask me why I acted the part of a desperate and defeated lover who would gamble with love and marriage? Why don't you ask me why I married you?"

"I thought perhaps you would tell me without my asking you," Jeanie admitted demurely, brown eyes caught and held by the flame in the blue.

"I did it because I was afraid of losing you," the man said, hoarsely. "I always scoffed at love at first sight, but I knew as soon as I saw you that I never wanted to let you go again. I had to think fast, so I made up that perfectly improbable tale to try and keep you. If you hadn't consented, I was going to keep you on board until you would.

"I come from the sort of Viking stock that know their women as soon as they see them and take them immediately. I was going to love you so much that you would forget such a person as Leigh Donaldson ever existed."

Suddenly he dropped to his knees and buried his head against her. "You'll let me help you forget him, won't you, my darling? I'll be so good to you."

Jeanie lifted the blond head so that his eyes met hers. Then with a little gasp she slid down beside him on the deck, and as he drew her into his arms, she whispered: "I think I forgot Leigh the moment I saw you, my Vik-

ing. I realized that my feeling for Leigh was just the need to be loved; the lonesomeness that I had felt all my life. I built a dream around him. I didn't love him, I loved the dream. I hated to give it up. Then when I saw you, I knew that you were the reality."

There was silence aboard the little boat. Jeanie's Viking was holding her in a breathless embrace. His lips were pillaging the closed eyelids, the black curls, the soft white neck and settled at last with possessive finality upon the trembling red mouth in a kiss that made her forever his own.

When he finally lifted his head, she buried her flushed face and tousled curls against the broad shoulder that was so comforting.

"My little love gambler," he whispered, teasingly.

"This was one time I didn't gamble," Jeanie lifted her head to tell him. "I was positive from the moment I looked into your eyes that this was a sure thing!"

Love's Assurance

ABOVE the hill
The moon rose high,
When, lo, I heard
A witching sigh,
That swiftly came
Across the dew
And carried me
Away to you.

The stars leaned low,
The night grew still,
And, when I won
Your windowsill,
Within your room
Where shadows crept,
Upon your bed
You smiled and slept.

Although the night
And stars are gone,
With songs I meet
The flaming dawn,
And in my heart
There is but glee,
For your love made
You dream of me.

—Edgar Daniel Kramer

She took Eddie's arm possessively, and Micky saw them from the window, as she meant him to

Love and Let Love

By PHYLLIS HAMBLEDON

Life puts up a "Stop" signal for Lorraine

LORRAINE CARMICHAEL, rich, spoiled and lovely, fell in love with Micky Fanshawe, her cousin Beryl's steward, and all but forced him to admit he loved her, too. Then Beryl told the girl that she herself had been having an affair with Micky, and that she expected to marry him when her divorce went through.

Lorraine, heartbroken, plunged into a gay social life, but she could not forget. Micky left his job and the next

thing she heard was that he was desperately ill. Eddie, Beryl's brother, took her to see him.

Lorraine had thought she could stand meeting Micky again so well. She had told herself that she was quite hard-boiled about him. She'd been a bit upset at first when she heard he was ill. But now here he was, recovering perfectly well, and Beryl and Eddie were looking after him. And he would probably marry Beryl now, which would be the best possible thing that could happen.

As for her, what interest had she in him? How did he compare with the people to whom Harriet had introduced her? A mere steward. Less than that, an out-of-worker, one who hadn't been able to hold a job when he had got it.

Deliberately, she trained herself to despise him, against every instinct. Deliberately, she put him out of her heart forever.

On this particular evening Eddie had taken her out for a cocktail.

When he said: "I say, what about coming round and having a look at old Micky?" she had thought: Why not? I can't be upset now. Rather amusing to see how I stand it.

And in the car on the way to Eddie's, she had been at her brightest, so that Eddie, too, had thought: She was right. It was only an infatuation. She'd recovered.

But then when she stood in the doorway and saw this other Micky, this pale, thin Micky who so obviously had gone down to the Valley of the Shadow and had come back again, it was different.

Vanished was that gay, self-assured creature who had taken the initiative in everything. This man who looked at her as if he had seen a ghost, roused in her an almost unbreakable pity. She wanted to run to him, put her arms round him, say to him, "My poor darling, was it as bad as all that?"

And so, since she couldn't do that, she just stood there trembling, every trick, every conventional word gone from her. And Micky said nothing, either. It was Eddie who managed to pull the situation together.

Jiminy, I've made a bad break here, he was thinking, as he talked very fast of things that didn't matter and that didn't require an answer. When he stopped, from sheer breathlessness, they were themselves again.

Lorraine was saying in a shrill, high voice, how nice it was to be getting better in time for Christmas and that she hoped Micky would enjoy plum pudding and mince pies.

Lorraine went as soon as she decently could, driving herself back.

Micky was silent for the rest of the evening. He was glad Eddie was going out.

He had things to think about. Lorraine with that little-girl look on her face, not the self-reliant, arrogant Lorraine of the photograph in the newspaper. And Beryl, who had offered him peace and an answer to all his difficulties. But what an answer! Had he no manhood left, then? Was he to be practically supported by a woman?

It was a grim struggle Micky fought out that evening, facing realities, staring the future straight in the face, coming at last to a decision.

LORRAINE danced until dawn, and afterward she lay awake, tossing and turning. She rose the next morning dry-eyed and bitter. She had her grapefruit and coffee in bed, and dressed listlessly. Lots of things to do, and not one worth the doing.

She was ready for going out when there was a violent ring at the bell. She opened the door herself. To her amazement Beryl Smeaton stood on the threshold.

"May I come in?" she said.

"Of course," said Lorraine.

Something, she saw, had upset Beryl. Her fur coat had been hastily buttoned, her hat was slightly awry. She was deadly white, her make-up two mere smudges of red upon her cheekbones.

"I'll come to the point," said Beryl. "What have you done with Micky?"

"With Micky?"

"Yes. Don't look so innocent! He's gone."

"But I don't know. I—"

"You came to see him last night, didn't you? I'll never forgive Eddie for that. Yesterday Micky promised me to come back again. We'd made up. We'd forgiven each other. I was so happy last night, and now it's all over.

"He's gone. He's left a note saying he could not accept my offer, after all. And I happen to know he has hardly a cent and not a chance of a job. Well, I ask you what have you done with him?"

"I tell you," said Lorraine, "I haven't seen him. I don't know anything about him."

"Listen to me, Lorraine."

Mrs. Smeaton had come nearer to her. She was twisting and untwisting her gloves as if trying to torture them.

"Listen to me. You've got to leave me Micky. He was mine until you came between us. You have so much. You're young, you're pretty, you're rich. But I have only him. He's the last thing left to me. Can't you be generous? Can't you let him alone?"

"I tell you I don't want him!" said Lorraine.

"As if anybody having once loved Micky, could stop loving him," said Beryl. "Where is he?"

"I swear to you that I don't know."

The woman looked at her and shrugged her shoulders.

"All right then," she said, and she fairly spat out her words. "Somehow I'll have to find him. Some time he'll have to come back to me. But I warn you, if I have to fight for him, I'll do it, and I'll use whatever weapons I can get hold of! So goodby, Lorraine. I wish I'd never met you. I hope to Heaven that I'll never meet you again."

She was gone. The door closed heavily upon her. Lorraine was alone. She rested her chin on her hands. She was worried. Yesterday Micky had had a job with Beryl. Now he hadn't. He had seen her in the interval, and had refused it. Her fault, Beryl had said. Well, Lorraine was inclined to think that it was.

Micky penniless again, and still weak. Something ought to be done about it. What?

CHAPTER VIII

CHRISTMAS came and went. The Fanshawes couldn't make out what had happened to Micky. Though thinner and paler, he seemed physically almost as well as ever. But here he was, still without a job.

Not that he didn't answer every advertisement there was to answer; not that he didn't go to every fair-sized place around about, to try to get work. And all the time he might still have returned to Mrs. Smeaton. Every week there were letters from her.

But he wouldn't go.

"I'm never going to take a job under a woman again," he said.

"But, Michael dear, that's so silly!"

said Mrs. Fanshawe. "Mrs. Smeaton was such a nice woman. She was always so sensible and motherly."

Micky felt like saying: "Oh, yeah?"

He answered instead: "I know, mother, but I tell you I can't do it. It goes against the grain. A man ought to have a man as boss. I'll find a job, never fear. Spring's coming. Men who work on the land are sure to be wanted. If you'd put up with me just a little longer—"

"But of course, Micky, it isn't that. You know that your father and I love to have you."

But he knew of course that even what he ate was a drain on their slender resources. He stopped smoking altogether, because he couldn't afford it. His clothes were getting shabby; he was inwardly desperate.

Then one day there came a letter from Eddie Stone.

DEAR OLD MICKY:

How goes the world, and are we properly convalescent? Here's hoping this finds you as it leaves me, and so on and so forth.

Listen, I've come into an unexpected windfall. An aunt's left me a tidy thousand or so. Now, being a prudent lad, I've a mind to invest it, and it struck me with all this back-to-the-land talk that I'd like to buy a truck farm or an orchard.

I heard of the very thing the other day, owner just died, and it's up for sale. But how am I to know that I'm not being swindled? So it's like this: Can you come and give me expert advice before I hand over the money? I enclose expenses and fee, which I believe is the usual one. And come as soon as possible.

Micky went the same day. He called Eddie up as soon as he arrived in New York. The next morning they motored into Jersey in Eddie's sports car.

Eddie explained his project as they went, quite convincingly. This farm was mostly grass orchard with a few acres in fruit trees and an established trade with the city markets in potatoes, strawberries in season, and asparagus. The average net profit for the last three years had been fairly good.

"I'd have thought it ought to be a lot more than that for the acreage," said Micky. "Sounds as if overhead expenses had been too large, or something of that kind."

"Well, I don't know," said Eddie. "I admit I don't much like the looks of this Hendry, the present manager, but he's been there for donkey's years."

MICKY pondered as the car drove onward. He had run Mrs. Smeaton's dairy farm as a paying business. At the agricultural college, fruit growing had interested him particularly.

He wondered what was wrong with the farm for the profits to be so small. Bad drainage, perhaps, or insufficient windbreak. Or it might be some deficiency in gathering and marketing.

But the farm, when they reached it, had a prosperous look. The planting had been scientifically done; the trees looked well pruned and healthy. The situation was ideal, and the soil excellent. Hendry, too, when they met him, looked one hundred per cent efficient.

"Well, Mr. Hendry," said Eddie, "here's our expert, Mr. Fanshawe."

"Glad to meet you, sir. I'm sure we can satisfy you that things are as they should be."

And so indeed he did, more or less. He was a man who obviously knew his job. They saw the plum trees, the pear orchard, the dwarf apple trees, everything. Saw the books and the auditors' reports, all apparently in order.

But the question of profits still troubled Micky, and he said so.

"Well," said Hendry, "last year was a bad year. Fruit was too cheap, you remember. Then in the picking season we had trouble with the extra help. This year I'll pay them by the day rather than by the bushel. Leave it to me, Mr. Stone, and I'll guarantee you another five hundred dollars."

"I'll tell you what," said Eddie. "You're short-handed. You need more skilled assistance."

"Well, I could use it, if the overhead expenses would stand it, but they won't."

"They'll have to stand it." Eddie dropped his bombshell. "I want you to take on Mr. Fanshawe here, as co-manager with you, drawing the same salary as you did, Hendry."

Both the men turned and stared at him. The thing had come as a complete surprise to Micky. Then his face lit up with happiness and gratitude.

Eddie was a mighty swell sport. He was doing this to help him. You could take a favor like that from a man, because you could pay him back in full measure, in work and profits.

But before he could speak, Hendry broke in. His brow was dark.

"I don't think that would work at all, Mr. Stone. Mr. Fanshawe may be an expert, but, after all, theoretical work is different from practical. I've been boss here."

"Well, now I'm the owner," said Eddie blandly, "there will be two bosses, or one, if you prefer to resign, Mr. Hendry."

Hendry drew patterns on paper. He was sullen. He couldn't afford to go, but this Fanshawe would cramp his style terribly. Better be careful what he said, though, or they'd get suspicious. He forced a smile.

"Well, of course, Mr. Stone, I don't want to resign, and I expect Mr. Fanshawe and I would work together all right. If the overhead expenses—"

"Trust Fanshawe to keep an eye on those," said Eddie. "I never knew him not to make a business proposition out of anything he touched."

They talked more and agreements were reached. Eddie promised to see the lawyer tomorrow. He was coming on, thought Micky, growing up. He had handled this with a man's adroitness.

And how wonderful it was to have a job again. Fifteen hundred a year and a house to share with Hendry. Not that he liked Hendry, but that wasn't going to matter.

At the entrance there stood a stunning green and silver car.

"That's a pretty job," said Eddie, pausing to examine it.

"Got it last November," said Hendry. "Yes, I like it."

Eddie dropped the subject, but Micky was wondering. How did Hendry manage to buy a car like that on fifteen hundred a year?

AS they drove back again to town, Micky tried to put some of his gratitude into words. But Eddie cut him short rather abruptly. When they parted, Eddie drove straight to Lorraine's apartment.

She was waiting for him impatiently. She had sent Miss Lamb, her new chaperon, out to a concert. She was a "Lamb," indeed; she always did what the girl wanted her to do.

"Well?" Lorraine asked eagerly.

"It's all settled," said Eddie. "Micky approved of the farm, and said so. So I'm seeing the lawyers tomorrow. I told him he was co-manager, and I never saw a man so glad about anything."

"I'm glad, too," said Lorraine.

"Here's my check then, and thank you for all you've done, Eddie. You'll never let Micky know that it's really my farm, will you?"

"No, but when he thanks me I feel like a hypocrite. He's terribly grateful. He says he's going to increase the profits. Who knows, it might be a nice little nest egg for you some day if everything else goes up in smoke, Lorraine. I'd like to ask you one thing. Why did you do it?"

"I'll tell you. Beryl came to see me one day before Christmas. She blames me for everything that happened to Micky. And, of course, she was right. If it hadn't been for me he'd still be with her, I suppose.

"And that afternoon when you took me to see him, it seems he'd practically promised he'd go back again. But the next day he wrote her and said it was all off. And he hadn't a job and there was no prospect of one. I had to do something about it, you see."

"It was mighty decent of you."

"Not at all. I just wanted to sleep nights," said Lorraine.

The doorbell rang again. She jumped to her feet.

"There's Gerald," she said. "We're going out to a show, and I haven't changed. I'll have to send you away, Eddie. And again thank you, thank you, darling."

She pushed him out of the door just as she admitted Gerald.

That fellow is always here nowadays, Eddie thought discontentedly as he climbed into his car.

CHAPTER IX

IT was very early in the morning. Micky awoke and glanced at the watch beside his bed. It was three o'clock. In another half hour the truck would start off to market with its load of spring flowers, its new vegetables.

He rose with infinite quiet, stole downstairs past Hendry's door, out into the sharp spring morning. Nobody was astir. Only from the sparrow's nest under the eaves came the first sleepy twitterings.

Keeping out of sight of upper windows, Micky made his way to the packing room. Only Hendry had a key to it, but a week ago Micky had done useful work with a penknife on one of the windows. He pushed it up now, let himself in with infinite caution.

The sieves of new potatoes stood ready. He counted them; thirty-two. Then he entered the figures in a little notebook which he took from his dressing-gown pocket. The flowers he could not count.

He let himself out of the store house, and got back into his own room unobserved. An hour and a half later both he and Hendry were up.

But Hendry was out first. He had opened the shed and was superintending the loading of the truck with the market produce.

Micky strolled past on his way to the greenhouses. His job was to inspect the thermometer, to check in the gardeners before he and Hendry returned to breakfast at six o'clock.

He was excited, though excitement did not show in his manner. He was as fit and well as he had ever been. There was a new hardness about his mouth, but it became him.

The two men did not talk at breakfast. Hendry buried his nose in the paper. Just as they finished, the truck returned. The driver handed in the sheaf of weekly receipts from the wholesaler with whom they dealt. Hendry took them, glanced at them, was about to put them into his pocket.

A head appeared at the window above. "What do you want, this time of night?"

"May I look at them?" asked Micky.

"Of course. There they are."

Micky examined them.

"Only twenty-five half sieves of new potatoes," he said. "I thought there would be more."

"Potatoes with the stalks still on them are very deceptive," said Hendry.

"Evidently. As a matter of fact I haven't had much experience with new potatoes."

"And I have. Risky things, but when you grow fruit you've got to run one or two sidelines to keep you busy in the early part of the year."

He went out, leaving the receipts with Micky, who quickly whipped out the notebook. He examined figures. In less than five minutes he had his evidence complete.

He went to the phone and called Eddie.

"Say, Eddie, can you come over today?" he asked.

"I don't think I can," said Eddie. "I've another engagement."

"It's pretty important," said Micky.

"Oh, very well," said Eddie.

He sounded cross. This owning a fruit farm didn't seem as simple as he had thought it. When Micky had rung off, he got Lorraine at once on the phone.

"I'm sorry, m'dear," he said. "I shan't be able to take you out this afternoon, after all. I had a call from Micky. Something's up at the farm. I'm to go this afternoon without fail to see him."

"Oh, Eddie, couldn't I go, too?" asked Lorraine.

"Why, of course, if you're interested. But we'll probably be discussing summer pruning or something of that kind."

"Of course I'm interested. After all, it's my farm."

"Then come, by all means, but—"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing."

MICKY had turned into a regular woman hater, thought Eddie. When Beryl went to see him, he would hardly speak to her. He'd probably treat Lorraine the same way, and that would be awkward.

Lorraine, too, knew that the situation would be awkward, for a different reason. He mustn't think I want to see him, she decided, but he'll hardly imagine I've come because I'm interested in early potatoes. Then he'll have to think I've come because I can't let Eddie out of my sight for a moment.

She chuckled. Eddie was really a terribly useful person. She showed a certain tenderness toward him on the drive to the farm.

Eddie found himself responding. A grand person, Lorraine, when she wasn't all dolled up and affected and silly. She was the sort of girl other fellows envied you going about with. They arrived in the happiest of moods.

Micky, hearing their car, came from the orchard, saw Lorraine, and stopped short.

She looked so sweet today in leafy green which brought out every tint of her burnished hair. So delicious, altogether desirable. It was just a year since they had danced together, ridden together and now the primroses were glowing again in the woods.

But he didn't want her here. This was serious business. Work instead of women, every time, for him. Besides, he had told himself lately that he was growing out of that silly infatuation. It's only love-sick boys who can't recognize when something is over.

Lorraine saw his look, and was angry. If he doesn't think Eddie and I are on the point of being engaged, it won't be my fault, she decided.

"Hello, Micky," she said. "Don't blame Eddie for the entrance of Eve into Eden, but we're celebrating today and I wouldn't let him come without me even for business."

"I'm afraid I'll have to talk to him privately for a moment or two, however," said Micky.

"Well, won't you be polite enough to let him show me around first? I mean, it's his farm, isn't it?"

"Certainly, by all means," said Micky, turning on his heel. "You will find me in the office when you're finished," he added to Eddie.

"My dear child," said Eddie, when they were alone, "why did you do that?"

"Because he's conceited and wants to be shown that his affairs don't always come first, and also because I do want you to show me the farm, Eddie."

She took his arm and smiled up into his face. From the window of the office Micky saw that look, as she meant him to.

He remembered how annoyed Eddie had been at the idea of coming down. He watched them disappear into the orchard in which there was already the first faint powdering of green.

"The deuce," he said to himself. And then a few unprintable words.

He remembered again that Beryl had always said that Lorraine and Eddie ought to marry each other. He told himself that nothing could be more suitable. Was Eddie kissing her now?

It was a long time before they came back to the office again. When they did, Micky was livid with fury. Hendry was out, and he wanted to get through with what he had to say to Eddie before he returned. Here he was at last, and Lorraine sat down obediently outside to wait.

"Well," said Eddie breezily, entering the office. "Anything the matter?"

"Hendry's cheating you," said Micky.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. I've got my evidence. I told you, didn't I, that the profits should be twice as much? He's in league with the fellow to whom we sell our stuff. I gather he and Cooper go fifty-fifty on the profits."

And then he got out his papers and proceeded to explain his proofs.

THAT was a mighty pretty girl sitting by the wall, thought Hendry, driving up in his expensive car. He cast an admiring look at Lorraine as he walked across the yard. The sort of girl you'd like taking out to a dance and supper afterward. He took off his hat politely.

"Waiting for anybody?" he asked, and his voice was a caress.

"For Mr. Stone," said Lorraine, to whom people like Hendry were quite impossible.

"Oh, I see."

Now what in thunder is Stone doing here? thought Hendry. Can't have him butting in like this. Has he come just because it's a nice afternoon for a run and he has a pretty girl along?

"Hello, hello!" he said, as he walked into the office.

The two men already there made no response.

"Anything the matter?" he asked, still cheerful.

"Nothing much except that you're fired, Hendry," said Eddie.

"Fired? Is that a joke?"

"No, unless these figures are a joke," said Eddie. "These are Mr.

Fanshawe's as compared with Cooper's." He began to read them aloud. "Monday as per Mr. Fanshawe, thirty-six sieves new potatoes. As per Cooper—"

"It's a lie!" said Hendry, red in the face.

"It's a lie that will be repeated in the courts, unless you're out of here within half an hour," said Eddie.

"I stand my ground. It's Mr. Fanshawe's word against mine."

"And I am the owner, and I prefer Mr. Fanshawe's word to yours," said Eddie.

He rose.

"It's no use, Hendry. You're fired. Make it snappy, will you? Any chance of your giving us a cup of coffee, Micky, while this bird packs?"

"I'll bring an action against you for libel!" cried Hendry furiously.

"My lawyers are Cross and Barton," said Eddie.

He and Micky went back to the house. Lorraine perceived nothing very wrong. She devoted herself to Eddie.

They'll be engaged very soon, if they're not already, thought Micky.

He went to bed that night, manager of the farm with twenty-five hundred a year as salary. But he wasn't thinking of that. He was thinking of Lorraine and of her cousin. Well, I wish them both all the luck in the world, he told himself, drearily.

CHAPTER X

IT was the end of April, and spring had come with all her banners. Summer itself was stepping over the horizon. And to celebrate the occasion, Lorraine and her set had hit on the glorious idea of organizing a scavenger party.

Six young couples had been invited to the apartment for dinner. Afterward they would be given a list of ten ridiculous things to search for.

They would set out in pairs, to meet later at Bill and Vivien Shackleton's place down in the Jersey hills, where there would be food and drink and a nice cash prize for the lucky pair who had found the greatest number of things on the given list.

It ought to be tremendous fun, thought Lorraine, dressing for the occasion.

Gerald was driving her in her own car since his was out of commission. And she couldn't help being flattered by the knowledge that the other women envied her, that Gerald was, to put it crudely, the catch of the season, and that he was quite evidently head-over-heels in love with her.

Really, Lorraine told herself, life was full of such lots of things. It was still non-stop all the way. She'd thought spring lovely last year at Beryl's. In New York it was simply intoxicating.

Oh, but it was good to be young and rich and pretty, she thought. Those were the things that really mattered. True, she wasn't quite as rich as she had thought she was. Clothes cost such a lot; the stores always made you buy far more than you wanted of them. And she'd been bowled over by that bill from the caterers. *Three hundred dollars!*

She was hesitating a little between a dress of flowered chiffon which was decorative, but hardly suited for a scavenger party and a sports costume of silk when there was a knock at the door. The Lamb came in. She was a charming old lady, a very model for all old ladies.

"Here's a letter for you, Lorraine," she said. "Are you going to be very late tonight, my dear?"

"I don't know," said Lorraine, seeing that the letter was typewritten and therefore uninteresting. "You must go to bed anyway, Lambkin darling."

"I don't really think you ought to go off in cars like that," said the Lamb reprovingly. "In fact, I think you should marry that nice, wealthy young Gerald Price, and settle down, my dear."

The Lamb went out, and Lorraine decided on the sports dress. She was all dressed before she remembered the letter.

"Who's with me? To Eddie's farm, to welcome in May Day!" She raised her arm in a dramatic gesture

She turned it over, saw that it was from her lawyer again. They'd pestered her quite a lot lately. Wanted her to go into the office to see them.

She'd meant to, but there always seemed so many other things to do. Besides, they'd probably only tell her again that she was being too extravagant.

Leave it till tomorrow. Why not? Or no, better get it over, throw it into the wastebasket after she'd read it.

But she did not throw it into the wastebasket, after all. She sat with it in her hands for a long time. She had read:

> DEAR MADAM:
>
> We very much regret to inform you that we have today received news that Bringham Mills have closed down with a very serious deficit, and though there is some talk of reconstruction in the future it is quite impossible that you will receive any dividend for the next three years at any rate.
>
> Several times during the last few months we have wanted to see you with a view to transferring your capital into something more stable, but unfortunately have been unable to arrange an appointment with you.
>
> We express our very sincere regret and we shall be glad if you will call at the office tomorrow morning in order to consider the situation.

It was from these mills that mother had got nearly all her money. She had come from the South and her capital had been left in Southern business. The mills had seemed as stable to Lorraine as Gibraltar, and now they'd closed down.

Of course everybody said that the textile industries were suffering terribly. But it seemed impossible, incredible.

This meant—why, it meant she had hardly anything left. It meant no more apartment on Park Avenue, no more Lambkin, no more pretty dresses, no more anything. It meant selling the car; it meant—

It was like a bubble blown into air. Lorraine sat there and took no account of time. She was not rich. She was poor. True, there had been a tiny quarterly payment from the fruit farm. But it had been nothing — nothing. The price of one evening dress, that was all.

She couldn't economize; she never had. She had been born with a silver spoon in her mouth. And now that it had been wrested away from her, she didn't like the sensation. She didn't know what to do about it.

And yet, there was something she could do. She laughed aloud from sheer relief. She could marry Gerald, and the money she'd lost wouldn't matter. She'd say yes to him next time he asked her, and things would be all right. And there she'd been getting all hot and bothered! It was inevitable. Which just shows how numb a sudden shock will make you.

Gerald could give her a yacht, a country house — everything, including social position. His wealth made the money she had lost seem a trifle.

THAT night at dinner Lorraine was the gayest of them all. Eddie watched her. He was beginning to have a funny feeling about Lorraine. He wished she'd go in his car, instead of Harriet Holcomb who was a bit too swift for his taste.

And tonight he disliked Gerald Price, with all his money and his easy conquests, a trifle more violently than usual.

"The lists!" cried Lorraine, when dinner was over. "The lists!"

Bill, who was otherwise William Shackleton, had made them out. There

were twelve of them. Each pair of competitors was given a copy. Gerald read theirs over Lorraine's rounded shoulder, his eyes more fixed on the rosy curve than on the printed paper she held.

Ten things they were to find and take to the Shackleton's house as soon as might be. Two old-fashioned hair curlers, a railroad ticket to New York, a branch of dogwood, a clipping from a last year's paper, a bottle of sarsaparilla, a charm out of a Christmas snapper.

They were to bring, too, a clothespin, a child's rattle, a nib for an ordinary penholder and a record from a musical show of at least two years ago.

"Christmas snappers in April! You're a fiend, Bill," said Harriet. "And as for the branch of dogwood, haven't you ever heard:

> 'My mother said that I never should
> Play with the gypsies in the wood'?"

"I've got a charm from a snapper in my room," whispered Lorraine hurriedly to Gerald. "And the quickest way of getting the newspaper clipping is to drive straight to a newspaper office."

They were away before any of the others, one of their trophies already in Lorraine's brocaded handbag. At the newspaper office there was some delay. It wasn't a good hour for buying back numbers of papers, a clerk told them disapprovingly.

But Lorraine cajoled him. He gave in, finally, and they got it.

"We'll leave the dogwood until the last," said Lorraine. "All the woods must be full of it now. It's the curlers that worry me."

"My valet's wife wears them," said Gerald. "I saw her once with her hair all done up when I came home early in the morning. It's my place next, I think."

He took her up to his apartment with him, and went in search of Mrs. Bevan. Lorraine stood and looked about her. She hadn't been in Gerald's place before. Of course he wouldn't keep it if—when—she married him.

She didn't know whether she liked it. The divans and the chairs were so soft and feminine; the pictures were queer and rather horrid. She wasn't shocked; only children were shocked. And yet—

He came back with two kid curlers. He found the victrola record as well. It was "Tea for Two."

Lorraine had a feeling he was going to kiss her. And she was suddenly shy, though she had kissed him several times. She ran out to the car again. And then they were driving toward the tunnel.

"We'll find clothespins and sarsaparilla and the other things right in the country," said Lorraine.

"We'll have refreshments somewhere and give a waiter a tip to get them for us," said Gerald.

THEY drove on. The cars became fewer. They shot through Newark. At a wayside station Lorraine bought a ticket to New York, came out again, saying she'd left something in the car, laughed at the ticket agent's blank look of astonishment.

At a roadhouse they were lucky. The pen point rusted on the front desk. The waiter got them the clothespin, but sniffed at the mention of sarsaparilla.

"We'll get that at a village store; the kind that sell peppermints and chewing gum," said Gerald.

"But they've closed for the night," said Lorraine.

"Money will open them," said Gerald.

"Do you think so?"

Money, she had time to think, would open any door, in Gerald's opinion. In this case he was right. They found the store and battered until a head was thrust through a window above it.

Gerald explained what he wanted, said he'd pay handsomely. A bottle of sarsaparilla was soon produced.

And now there was only the branch of dogwood. Presently they found a wood, the sort of place where dogwood ought to grow. Gerald took his electric torch from his pocket. He went to the edge of the road and turned the light onto the foliage and a rabbit went scuttling away in sudden fear.

"There's dogwood here," he said. "I saw some last year. We can climb over the fence."

They climbed over. Lorraine wondered who had been with Gerald last year. She couldn't imagine him gathering dogwood here alone.

The moon came out from behind a cloud. The birches were very silvery in the sudden light of it.

I'm ruining my shoes, thought Lorraine, and didn't care. The woods were so marvelous in the moonlight. And there were the dogwood blossoms gleaming white in this unearthly radiance.

She gathered them, felt Gerald beside her, felt his arm go about her. Lifted her face for his kisses.

My mother said that I never should.

Oh, yes, no wonder "my mother" had said such things. There was a magic in the woods. But it ought to have been somebody else, not Gerald who held her so. Somebody else's kisses on her lips.

Gerald didn't belong to woods nor to the country, but to high-powered cars and to civilized places. And he must have thought so, too, for after the first kiss he released her though he was breathing rather quickly and his eyes were very bright.

"A bit messy, isn't it? You'll spoil your dress. Let's go back to the car, shall we? We've got all the things on the list, which is more than anybody else has done, I bet. We needn't hurry."

But in the car he kissed her with sudden violence. He kissed her as he never had before. Hungrily, unrestrainedly. The blossoms were crushed between them.

Lorraine was afraid. This wasn't Gerald any more. This was a stranger. She pushed him away, gasping.

"Don't—don't—I don't like it. Please, don't!"

"Sorry, honey lamb, but you're so sweet to kiss."

"I—I'm sorry, too. Let's drive on."

"Must we? Lorraine, can't we get it all fixed up? Won't you marry me?"

"Why, I—I don't know."

"I've asked you three times now," said Gerald, "and that ought to be enough for any girl. Want to make a doormat of me, by any chance?"

"No, no; of course not, Gerald. I think it's all right, but let's leave it until we come home, shall we? I'll tell you then. Let's find the others now. They'll think it queer."

"They'll think it queer if we come too soon," said Gerald. "You see, they know—"

She was going to say yes, but she was still frightened. If she said yes now, he would kiss her again. And these woods still intimidated her, the hush and the silence. She wanted to get away quickly, to safety. Gerald was all right if you weren't alone with him.

And yet you would have to be alone with the man you married. If she felt like that, she oughtn't to marry him.

But it was the only thing to do. Hadn't she lost all her money? What would she do if she didn't marry Gerald?

They were moving now. The road unwound itself before them. There were the lights of the village. She wasn't afraid any longer. Of course she was going to marry Gerald. Why hadn't she said she would then?

THEY reached Mrs. Shackleton's house at last. Lights were on and the door stood open. There were drinks and sandwiches and sausages and bacon.

"So the gypsies let you go, after all," said Harriet.

She was looking at Lorraine curiously. Lucky little devil, she was thinking, to have caught a plum like Gerald.

"They let us go," said Gerald.

But there was something triumphant in his voice, something certain. Yes, he's sure of her, thought Harriet. They're probably engaged already.

The others thought so, too. Eddie swore a little under his breath. He suddenly felt that he hated fooling and scavenger parties. Lorraine was too good for this fellow Price who was looking so exceedingly pleased with himself, though Lorraine was odd and emotional.

Somebody had turned on the radio. They were all hilarious. The things they had found were presented. It was only as Gerald and Lorraine laid their haul out, that Lorraine saw they'd forgotten the baby's rattle.

"I'll get that for you!" whispered Vivien Shackleton. "Come with me."

She and Lorraine ran upstairs together. At a doorway, Vivien put her finger to her lips. She turned the knob very softly.

In a room lit by a night light, a baby lay asleep, curls rumpled on a rosy cheek. A rattle lay on the pillow beside her.

"Bunty will lend it to you," said Vivien. "You can give it back after the prize has been awarded."

Lorraine bent over the cot. She wasn't used to babies.

"I never saw anything so lovely," she whispered breathlessly.

"A poor thing but our own," misquoted Vivien.

Lorraine raised her head and looked at her. In spite of the jesting, deprecating words, she saw in Vivien's eyes a look of utter love and of happiness. And she knew then why Bill and Vivien Shackleton had always seemed just a little bit different from the rest of them.

"It must be wonderful to have a baby," she said.

"Oh, not so bad," said Vivien. "We're having another in the autumn, by the way. Bunty would be lonely by herself, you see."

Lorraine bent, kissed the curled hand lying like a pink shell on the coverlet. If she married Gerald they'd have babies, too. Would they? Would he want them?

Could you imagine Gerald with a baby? Would you want your baby, your very own baby, to have Gerald for a father? Would you?

With Bunty's rattle they went downstairs. Gerald and Lorraine had won the prize. They were the only ones who had all the things required of them.

Bill handed Lorraine a crisp ten-dollar bill, and everybody cheered her. Gerald put his arm round her in front of them all.

"D'you know," said somebody, "it's May Day? The sun will be up in another hour."

"Isn't there something about May

Day?" asked Harriet. "Don't you wash your face in dew, and then turn round three times and you'll see the face of your future husband?"

"O-oh, let's do it!"

There was a chorus of girls' voices, the men looking rather sheepish. Lorraine suddenly had an inspiration.

"Listen, everybody! Eddie's fruit farm can't be more than ten miles away. Full of cherry blossoms and unlimited dew for everybody. Let's go there. Let's see the dawn in suitable surroundings. Let's dance under the apple trees!"

"But I say, Lorraine—"

Eddie was looking startled. His opposition spurred her on. She raised her arm with a dramatic gesture.

"Who's with me? To Eddie's fruit farm to welcome in May Day! And I'll be Queen of the May, mother! I'll be Queen of the May!"

They were all for her. They crowded into cars, girls in evening dresses, hatless men in dress suits, shouting and laughing together. They flew through the stillness of the country, hooted their way through sleeping villages. Eddie was morose beside the drowsing Harriet. Lorraine went too far, he thought.

Only Vivien and Bill were left behind. Vivien took up the discarded rattle.

"I don't know what is wrong with Lorraine," she said. "She is fey tonight."

And Lorraine, too, thought: I'm fey. But I'm going to see Micky again, for the last time, before I'm engaged to Gerald, and *all that* is over.

To Be Continued

In the next issue

AN IMITATION LADY

By JEAN FRANCIS WEBB

Her only rival was the girl she saw in the looking glass

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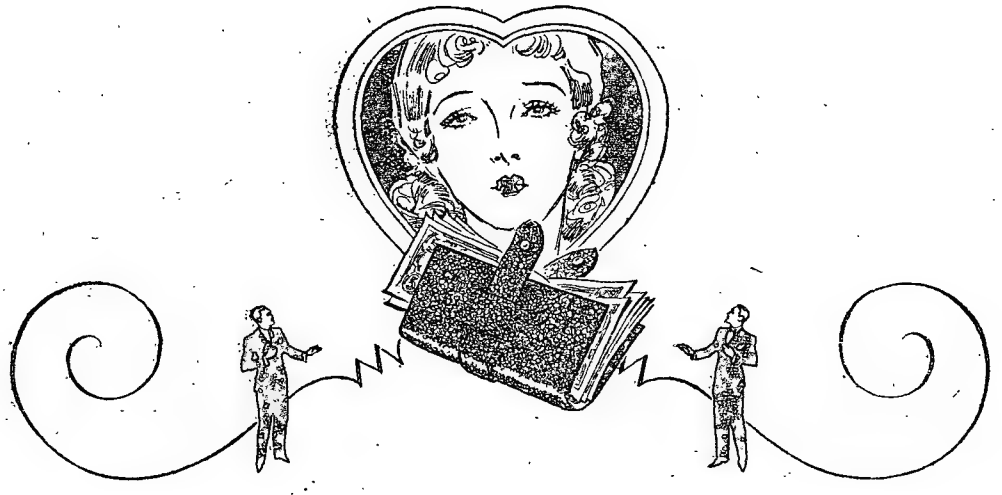


She could bear with saving all their good times against a rainy day. But it was just too much when he mentioned

Budget Love

By FRANCINE FINDLEY

HE was coming toward her through the long arbor of mauve-blue wistaria, his clipped, dark head held high, his fine shoulders set so proudly and strongly. Her heart leaped as always at the sight of him.

"Well, Elsa!" His voice thrilled on a deep note as he reached out through the warm white moonlight to draw her close.

"Well, David!" She had meant her own voice to be cool, annoyed, distant. But it was deep, too, as intense as his.

Her mouth beneath his, burned hotly. She was acutely conscious of his arms, his hands, his long, clean-lined limbs. Emotion stirred in her, the delightful, exquisite languor of love that always enveloped her at his caress.

Then his arms were withdrawn hastily, and he took a swift backward step.

"We mustn't do this. Love wasn't meant to be spent all in a moment. We must save some for the rainy days, when there isn't any moonlight." He spoke tenderly, laughingly.

Elsa Morton jerked away from him angrily, her delicate, beautifully molded face white and twisted.

"I think it needed just that—just that thing you've said, to finish us, David Grant. You cautious, cold-blooded—" She choked in her rage and could not go on.

David stared at her in amazement and pain. "Why, Elsa! Why, darling! I don't know what you mean."

Elsa thrust her face close to his. "Oh, yes, you do! Ever since you asked me to marry you, you've done nothing but talk saving and budgets to me.

"You'd like to do this for me—you'd like to take me there. But we had to be careful; mustn't overstep the budget. A picture show when I wanted to see a real show. A drive in a secondhand car when I wanted—" Her hands clenched. "It's just too much when you begin to budget love. I'm through."

David caught her by the shoulders and shook her gently, though his face was still white with pain. "Why, Elsa! Why, my dear! You know I've been scrimping and saving for our home, so that we could start with everything."

Her lips curled. "Start with everything? Nothing of the kind. Start with what the budget allows and hope for something better later on. I hate it. I hate the whole idea. I want what I want, now! Tomorrow can take care of itself."

The strong hands tensed on her shoulders. "I know where you got that idea, Elsa! I wasn't jealous. I was sure of you and your good sense. I let you go around with Jed Burden—"

"*You* let me! You didn't own me!" she snapped at him.

David shook his head. "No, I guess I didn't. I thought I did. I thought we belonged to each other, but if you fell for his crazy, extravagant—"

"Jed doesn't think it's crazy and extravagant to spend money on a girl he likes," Elsa replied coolly, but her blue eyes were burning. "Jed was proud to take me places and show me off."

"And you were proud to go. Being seen in places that cost money to go to, meant more than knowing I was working overtime, scratching and putting by for our future," he said bitterly. "I wouldn't have believed it."

"Well, now you know how important I think it is to have nice things and a nice time while I'm young—" Her voice broke on a wail.

David's brown eyes looked black. "Yes, now I know. I know plenty! I know that the girl I thought—"

The musical trumpeting of the horn on a fine, high-powered motor cut into his speech. He whirled and almost thrust the girl toward the arbor from which he had come.

"That's Jed Burden, now, calling for you. Couldn't even wait until you'd made a clean break with me! Well, go on and meet him. You want what you want now, do you? Go on and get it. I should have had sense enough to know. Go on. No use to stop you. Nobody can save a fool."

Elsa almost staggered. Never in the three years that she had known David Grant had she seen him angry. Never had she heard him speak as he had just spoken. And to her!

She jerked at the modest diamond gleaming so brightly upon her slim white finger.

"I hate you! I didn't know how awful you really were! Take this!" She pushed the ring at him. "Save it! Put it away for the next girl. It'll be that much that won't have to come out

of your budget. I'd give you back your kisses, if I could."

Her face was pale in the clear white light of the moon. She pivoted on her slender heel and rushed through the arbor to the street where Jed Burden awaited her, lounging luxuriously in his long, shining streamline roadster.

"Take me somewhere, Jed, quick. Take me somewhere expensive and give me champagne to drink. Feed me hummingbird's wings and make them serve them to me on golden plates!" she cried wildly as he helped her into her seat.

Her wide blue eyes took in his smooth hair, as golden as her own, his smart, well-cut dinner clothes, his careless, smiling, understanding eyes.

Jed was no penny pincher, no cheeseparing lover. He was no saver-up for a rainy day. He believed in spending freely now. Tomorrow was another day. He loved as he spent, extravagantly.

ELSA knew by his manner that he realized what had happened back beyond the arbor. And she knew that he was glad.

The moment they were on the highway outside of the town, he stopped the car and told her so, with his eyes, with his lips.

"My beautiful darling! Such eyes weren't made for watching gas bills in some little two-by-four cottage. I knew you wouldn't go through with all that."

It seemed to Elsa that he meant to drown her, overwhelm her, with his ardor, his compliments. This time, it was she who, breathless and a little dizzy, cried:

"Oh, Jed, we mustn't. We're perfectly mad. Stop! Let me go!"

But she wasn't perfectly mad, really. Strangely, for all Jed's passion, her heart was quiet in her breast. She was a little annoyed, even, that her crisp organza gown was crushed from his clutching, her hair rumpled, the lipstick upon her mouth faintly smeared.

"I'll look a fright, wherever you're taking me," she remarked.

Never once had she said such a thing to David. Never had she thought about crushed ruffles and rumpled hair with David.

Snuggled neatly in her corner again, with the car in smooth motion, she thought about that. But it was better, she decided at last, for the man to do the loving. Better for her not to give as richly of herself and her emotions as she had given to David.

Perhaps it paid—not to budget love, exactly—but perhaps it paid a girl not to let a man be so sure that he meant so much to her. Perhaps a man valued a girl more if he received less.

When Jed put his hand upon hers a few moments later, she shook it off. He stared down at the finger where David's small, pure diamond had glistened like a tiny, bright tear or a raindrop.

"I'm going to put the biggest stone I can find, right there," he told her as he bent to kiss the finger.

Elsa snatched her hand away. "Don't be so sure about that, Jed. I made one mistake. I'm not going to let myself in for another."

He grinned down at her. "You'll be making no mistake with me, Cunnin' Thing! You and I were made for each other. We'll never hold each other down. You and I are going to fly high, wide and handsome!"

As Elsa stepped into the Idlewild Inn with him, she believed him. It seemed to her that she couldn't have imagined any place more suited to her

mood of mad extravagance. The floor, the orchestra, the walls seemed to shout:

"This cost a fortune. All this was made at great expense, for your pleasure and your beauty!"

She gasped with delight and clutched Jed's arm. "I didn't mean I wanted you to spend a year's salary on me, Jed. If you get out of here with your cuff links you'll be lucky. I had no idea you were bringing me here."

That was quite true. In her most rebellious moment, she had never dreamed of dancing and supping at the Idlewild, called by the citizens for miles about the "Idle-Rich."

Jed's fingers squeezed her arm. "It isn't even good enough for you, honey. Travel with me, and see where we go! And don't mention the word salary to me. What could a man do on a mere salary? It's the outside stuff that a man who knows the ropes can pick up, that gives the wherewithal to do the things that are worth doing."

Elsa stared at him across the glass of champagne that had been poured for her. For a moment something that she saw in his face frightened her. Just a reckless flicker of expression, a peculiar, nervous-tightening of the lips. Then she laughed and raised her glass.

"Oh, well! Here's to crime!" she said.

Jed laughed, too, but not wholeheartedly.

"I wouldn't call it crime. Management is a better word. Can't make money without spending it, angel. That's why we're here. Why we're going to lots of other places."

He drained his glass, then glanced about the Inn as if in search of someone. Elsa turned to follow his gaze as his eyes lighted and he bowed.

"Sit pretty," he murmured out of the side of his mouth. "Parker Holt is over there with his new girl friend. His wife is in Europe. They're coming over here. He can put me next to something mighty good, if he feels like it. Play up, now!"

ELSA was bewildered. She hadn't the faintest idea what he was talking about. Only one thing stood out clearly. Parker Holt was extremely wealthy and extremely clever in business. He was a friend of Jed's. That was why Jed had come here.

She was vaguely disappointed that Jed had not come merely to please and dazzle her. Still, she was glad to be there, to meet Holt and his orchidlike girl friend.

It amused her to think that David would be shocked at her meeting such a woman. David was so terribly old-fashioned. All of his ideas were so stodgy.

And then Holt was bowing over her hand, smiling at her with hot, appreciative eyes.

"So this is the future Mrs. Jed?" he said caressingly.

Elsa was about to deny it. She had been the future Mrs. David so recently. It was almost as if something down deep within her began to cry:

"You're David's! In spite of everything, you belong to David!"

David's face, his high-held dark head, his brown eyes lit with tenderness, floated before her vision for a moment. It was so clear that she put up her hand and brushed her eyes. Then she was smiling and blushing and letting it be understood that she was indeed the future Mrs. Jed.

Jed nodded and smiled at her with triumph in his eyes. Then the two men excused themselves and went

away to "talk business" for a few moments.

Holt's companion, Lydia Lord, tapped a jeweled finger upon Elsa's arm. "Put something away for a rainy day, kid, while the p...tting's good. I like you—that's why I'm telling you," she said.

Elsa drew back as if the woman's touch had burned her.

"Put it in your own name and they can't touch you—after you're married, I mean—if you really marry him."

"Why, I—I don't know what you mean!" Elsa said indignantly.

Lydia Lord curved her black, delicately plucked eyebrows over eyes that were the color of blue ice.

"No? You don't? Well, I don't give a hang what happens to a man. Usually he has it coming to him. But women have a tough time. Use your eyes and look out for yourself. Use your ears and you'll hear more than the breeze in the trees, if you have any sense at all."

She leaned back and drew a tiny powder puff from a beautifully jeweled and enameled vanity case. She was humming with the orchestra as the men returned.

"Well, see you at lunch, Jed. Good night, young lady," Holt said. "Lydia and I are leaving now."

Elsa was silent for a time after they had gone. So silent that Jed looked at her inquiringly.

"What business were you and Holt talking about?" she asked abruptly.

Jed leaned across the table and patted her hand. "Is the future Mrs. Jed all worried?"

"I just wondered," Elsa replied faintly, certain that he did not mean to tell her.

"Papa will bring home the bacon. Baby doesn't have to bother her pretty head about how he does it. Wait till you see the headlight I'm going to bring you at the end of the week, if everything turns out right in this deal I have on with Holt."

ALL the way home from the Inn, Jed drove with his arm about her, his cheek pressed close to hers. Strange, how little the contact stirred her. Strange, when she had burned and throbbed at David's lightest touch.

Even the long good night kiss, even the fact that she had promised to marry Jed on the very night that she had so quickly broken her promise to David, left her quite unmoved. She felt that she was walking through some dream; that all that had happened had been unreal. In the morning she would waken, find David's ring still on her finger, hear his voice over the telephone wishing her good morning.

"But I won't, I won't!" she almost cried out as she undressed and crept into bed quietly so as not to rouse her mother and father. Never again would she hear David calling her "darling." Never again would her lips lift to meet his.

"I don't care! I hate him!" She beat her hot pillows in her effort to sleep. She turned from side to side. It did little good. It didn't even do any good to call David penny pincher. It did no good to think of his eternal budgets.

In front of her eyes danced his face, tired, tender, gentle. The little house that he had saved for. The window boxes he had made on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, instead of taking her to places like the Inn or to the theaters.

"As if a girl wanted to sit around and watch a man tinkering!" she mut-

tered indignantly. But it was sweet, that little house.

"Jed's sweet, too. He knows how to treat a girl like me." She was defiant about it. So defiant that she almost forgot what Lydia Lord had said to her. Almost forgot to fear some queer undercurrent in all Jed's talk about enormous diamonds and big money.

She did forget entirely at the end of the week when Jed brought her the great, winking jewel set in lacy platinum that he called a "good investment."

Her mother and father, grieved at her turning from David, had a great deal to say about the ring. It was foolish for a young man in Jed's position to buy such an expensive ring. It was shocking for her to be so quickly off with the old love and on with the new.

"I don't like the fellow," her father said flatly. "You're of age; you can do as you please. But you are marrying trouble. You will pay for what you've done to David."

"I'd pay plenty if I'd married David. He's mean and petty and stingy. I'm glad I found him out in time!" Elsa said furiously, stamping her foot. She brushed by her father and ran to her own room.

From a drawer, she took David's picture and stared at it steadily. How fine and straightforward and gentle his eyes were. That mouth that had lain upon hers so often! Try as she would, she could find no mark of meanness in that face.

"But he is! He is!" She ripped the picture into bits and flung them from her. She meant to rip his memory from her heart just as violently.

But, as she went about with Jed, wearing his lovely ring, dressing in her best, because he was so proud of her, it seemed to her that they were always meeting David. And with him, Mary Potter, who had once been Elsa's best friend. Since she had broken with David, Mary had been very distant.

"No wonder," Elsa thought. "She wants David for herself and she's afraid to be friendly with me for fear that I might take him back. Well, she's welcome to him." But it was queer, how sad it made her every time she saw David and Mary.

Jealously, she noted his every attention to the other girl. Bitterly, she reflected that he was spending money on Mary—money such as he had never spent on her.

"I guess I broke him of the budgeting business," she thought darkly.

Then she caught her breath sharply. It seemed pretty evident that David was spending his love upon Mary quite as freely as he was spending his money. Mary seemed to glow. She was as blooming as she had been as a youngster of sixteen.

Watching Elsa's face, Jed accused her of jealousy.

She whitened a little at the accusation, then began to laugh. But the laughter was too loud and too high to be real. Recklessness seemed to take possession of her and she flirted with Jed, was kinder to him than she had ever been before.

"I mustn't care. I must keep on hating David," she told herself, ignoring the fact that she had never been able to make herself hate him.

FALL came. Thanksgiving. She and Jed planned for a Christmas wedding. They would go to Bermuda on their honeymoon. Or perhaps to South America.

"It will be South America, prob-

ably," Jed said to her one night with a strange grimness. "Are you really a good sport, Elsa?"

"Why, I don't know. I've always thought myself one," she said nervously. She didn't like the tenseness of his mouth, the look in his light eyes.

"You may find out before you're much older. I'd let you in on something if I thought I could really trust you to keep your mouth shut."

Elsa gasped. "Why, Jed, how can you want to marry a girl when you aren't sure you can trust her?"

Jed snapped at her irritably, "Don't be dumb! I didn't say I didn't trust you. I was just wondering if—"

"If what?" Elsa prompted.

"You're a sweetheart," he said. "You'd stick to a fellow if he got in bad."

"Wh-what could happen?" she whispered

But he would say no more.

Lying alone in her room at night, Elsa began to worry about the change in Jed. Though they still went about to smart, expensive places, he was increasingly morose and cross.

Once, while they were dancing at the Inn, he spoke to her sharply within the hearing of David and Mary, who were wheeling by them. David caught Elsa's shamed glance and looked away. She knew that he had heard, and thought he was probably rejoicing, laughing at her.

Her father's words came back to her: "You're marrying trouble."

David's words rang in her ears: "One can't save a fool!"

Her hand tightened upon Jed's and she looked up into his clouded eyes.

"Smile at me, Jed! Hold me tighter! Please, let's be happy! Let's enjoy ourselves the way we used to all the time!"

Surprisingly, Jed did smile at her and tighten his clasp about her waist.

"You're a peach of a kid! You're a sweetheart. I guess if anything happened to a fellow—if a fellow got in bad—you'd stick to him, wouldn't you?"

Elsa turned dizzy and swayed upon the floor. The drums of the orchestra seemed like blood pounding in her ears. Her heart felt suddenly like ice.

"Why, I—I guess I would, Jed. But what could happen?" she whispered.

Jed shrugged and began to whistle softly in time with the music. "Oh, forget it. Eat, drink and be merry. Tomorrow's another day. I never bother about what the next day may bring."

But he was bothered. To Elsa's startled eyes, he seemed frightened. Along with this fright, there seemed to grow swift and sudden jealousy.

He began to berate her for watching David.

"You're crazy about him! You're still batty about that guy!" he'd say viciously. "You'd run right back to him, if he gave you the slightest encouragement."

"No!" Elsa protested, ashamed in her heart that there were moments when all that Jed said of her was true.

More than once upon seeing David, she had closed her eyes, tried to feel his arms about her instead of Jed's. More than once when Jed kissed her, she tried to make believe that David's mouth was touching hers, rousing her to the old fiery sweetness.

ONE night when they were at the Inn, Jed was called to the telephone.

Elsa sat at their table twirling the great diamond that he had given her, thinking of the wedding so soon to come. David, across the room from her, was leaning toward Mary, smiling at her.

Elsa was not looking at David, but she knew. She knew the little lines of laughter etched about his eyes, the fine, strong set of his shoulders, the deep note in his voice. He was making love to Mary. She knew as definitely as if she could hear his every word.

"I can't stand it! I can't sit here and bear it!" she thought wildly.

Suddenly it seemed to her that she could not marry Jed. She realized that David would haunt all her days and nights.

Nights! She shuddered, thinking of nights that she would spend in Jed's arms, haunted by the memory of the other man.

She half rose from her chair, intent upon flight. But she sank down again as she saw Jed coming back to her, his

face very white, his feet stumbling and shambling drunkenly.

"Well," he said hoarsely, "it's come! I thought I'd have time. I thought I'd get a break—"

Elsa's blue eyes grew enormous in her pale face. Her lips and throat felt dry. She was remembering what Jed had said to her:

"If anything happened to a fellow—if a fellow got in bad, you'd stick to him."

"What's happened, Jed?" Her voice was a faint thread of sound.

He took her arm and jerked her up from her chair. "Come out in the lounge where we can find some privacy, and I'll tell you. I've got to tell you, now. I've got to trust you."

Her knees were shaking under her as they skirted the dance floor. She could feel eyes—David's eyes—boring into her back. Almost, she could hear his voice: "One can't save a fool!"

And then they, she and Jed, were in the dimly lighted lounge. They were standing in a small, curtained alcove.

"I'm in trouble," he began abruptly. "That devil Holt gave me a wrong steer, got me to take some money and invest it. It's gone—wiped out. I haven't got a sou."

Elsa closed her eyes and straightened her shoulders. Then she said the thing she must say, the thing she had never, never expected to say as long as she lived.

"It's all right, Jed. You still have your position, and we can save. We can budget."

His laughter, harsh and a little coarse, cut in upon her.

"Yeah!" He yanked her arm and thrust his face close to hers. "Don't be so dumb. You weren't born yesterday. How long do you think I'll have my job when the firm finds out? Old Graham is coming to look over the books in the morning."

Elsa staggered away from him and leaned weakly against the wall. "Jed! You mean you took money from the firm—money you had no right to take? Why, that's just common thievery!"

"Oh, it is! And why did I do it, do you suppose? Because I had to have money to do things for you. I had to have money to get you that ring, to trot you around to places like this!"

Elsa's hand wavered to her mouth. "No! No! Oh, that's not true! You spent money like water, before. You've always spent freely. You had your car—you always wore good clothes—"

Jed actually snarled at her. "Well, what if I did? I never got in deep until I began to play around with you. You needn't pretend you didn't know! Where did you think the money was coming from? Out of the air?"

Only the girl's stifled breathing answered him.

He thrust his face close to hers. "I've got to have a thousand dollars before morning," he told her.

SILENTLY, Elsa drew off the big, blue-white diamond and held it out to him.

"And I have a little money—two or three hundred," she said. "Birthday presents from dad. I'll get it for you as soon as the bank opens in the morning."

Jed's lips drew back from his teeth. He thrust the ring into his pocket. "You don't suppose that's paid for, do you? And what good is a few hundred going to do me? Now listen. It's up to you to get that thousand. You got me into this mess."

Elsa hated him then as she once had prayed to hate David. "That's a lie,"

she said coldly. "And I can't get you a thousand dollars. My father has just been scraping through."

Jed held her eyes steadily. "I didn't say anything about your father. You can get it from Dave Grant. He's playing around with Mary Whoosis, but he's still crazy about you. Any fool can see that."

Elsa gasped as if he had struck her. Then her head lifted and her body stiffened.

"I wouldn't go to David, if I died for not going!" she said in a low, slow voice. "I wouldn't go to him to save a worm like you, for anything on earth!"

"Then," Jed told her viciously, "I'll go to jail. But I won't go without smearing your name all over the place. Everybody will know that if I did steal, I did it for a vain, silly little fool that—"

Two hands reached through the curtain and whirled Jed backward. David stepped into the alcove and drew the curtains closed.

"That's about enough talk out of you, Burden," he said firmly. "Put your wrap on and go back to your table, Elsa."

Elsa shook her head. "No," she said brokenly. "My place is here. How much have you heard?"

David met her glance with expressionless eyes. "Enough. Plenty. Look here—" He turned to the snarling Jed. "I'm going to give you the thousand dollars. You make up your firm's loss and then you take yourself out of town. I'll give you till noon to get out."

"No!" Elsa sprang forward. "No, David! You're doing this for me. I won't let you. He was right. The fault is mine as well as his. I'll take my share of the blame."

She put out a hand to steady herself and felt it caught in a firm, strong grasp. Her eyes were blind with tears. She felt herself lifted and thrust through the curtains. She felt other hands reaching for her, leading her to a distant divan. They were Mary's hands.

"Now, stay there, please, until David comes." Mary's voice was distant, icy. She moved away, out of Elsa's sight.

ELSA sat staring dazedly at the alcove. After centuries, it seemed, Jed came out, walked past her as if she did not exist, and disappeared.

Then David crossed to her, and she bent her head, ashamed to meet his eyes.

"Come, Elsa," he said in a voice entirely without any expression but command.

Somehow she got to her feet. She shuddered as she felt his hand, stiff and cold as ice, upon her bare arm, steadying her.

"Where is Mary?" she asked as he led her out to the secondhand roadster that she had once despised. Now it looked to her like a dear, honest friend. At least it was paid for with honest, clean money.

"She went home in a taxi," David said briefly.

"Jed?" she quavered.

"You won't see him again," was the grim answer. "Unless, of course, you want to."

Elsa put her hands over her face. "Oh, no. No. I never want to see him again. Oh, David, this has all been so terrible!"

"Forget it," he said sharply. "Tomorrow's another day."

Elsa gave a small, strangled cry.

"Oh, don't! Please, please don't. I know I've been just what he called me —a silly, vain fool, but I can't bear to have you say that."

David turned to her. "You mean you still love him? You still care for Burden?"

Elsa looked at him through swiftly falling tears that she could not stop. "Oh, no! I—I never loved him. I thought his way of life was—"

"Better than mine," David finished cruelly.

Her broken sobbing answered him.

For a long time he drove in silence. Then Elsa spoke to him.

"David, what you've done for me tonight is going to make a difference between you and Mary. I could tell by the way she spoke to me. I've caused you enough pain and heartache already. I'll go to her, or I'll go away. I could go to my aunt's—"

It seemed to her that she could not go on. All the old, wild sweetness that she had always felt at David's nearness was sweeping over her. All of her bruised being was crying out for the touch of his arms, his lips.

"I think the best thing would be to go away," she heard him saying against her ear. She was aware that he had stopped the car.

And then his arms were about her; his lips actually were upon hers.

"Young people always go away for a honeymoon, if they can afford it. We can, because I never overstep my budget, honey."

Elsa stared up at him. "But, David! Mary—"

"Mary is an angel and a saint, and the best friend either of us could ever have." David flushed. "She thought that if she and I went around together —oh, you know—the old jealousy business, might bring you to your senses. She knew you never loved Jed Burden."

Elsa began to cry, but this time from happiness. David slipped her little old ring back upon her hand.

"I'll get you a bigger one some day, sweetheart," he said tenderly.

Elsa stirred in his arms and lifted her lips. "You will not! We'll save that money," she said against his mouth.

"For a rainy day?" David was laughing gently.

"No." Elsa snuggled close to him, so close that she could feel the throbbing of his heart against her own. "No, darling. That will start our budget—for Junior's education."

Their tender, awed young laughter rang through the moonlight. Then as all lovers, they forgot time and place and budgets — even the Junior they hoped some day would be theirs. They remembered only that love was wonderful and beautiful—and eternal.

In the next issue:

An up-to-the-minute love story

TIME OUT - By ETHEL MURPHY

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

THERE have been several parties in New York during the last few weeks, whereat the Great and Near Great were gathered together. ALL-STORY authors, of course, are listed as the Great. Ruby M. Ayres, here from England; Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith, Beulah Poynter, Ethel Donoher, Ellen Hogue, Jean Francis Webb and Adrienne Peabody were among those present at one of the very nicest parties.

But when Adrienne Peabody goes to a party she has to "do her stuff" for the assembled guests. No other form of entertainment is needed.

What does she look like? Well, she is very like the sketch of herself at the top of her department, except that she looks more like home folks because she doesn't wear a turban. Her eyes are brown and lustrous, gazing out at life with humor and kindliness. And people just naturally gravitate toward her, to find out about themselves. Hers is a swell "parlor trick," but it is also, of course, much more than that.

Readers may be interested to know what she said to Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith about her writing name. Mrs. Smith's maiden name was Anita Blackmon, which is undeniably prettier, although not so striking. Adrienne said that her first reaction was: "Oh, use your maiden name!" But after she worked it out by numerology, she found that "Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith" would be much more successful.

Mrs. Smith said that this is true, according to her experience in writing for more than ten years. Fortune has smiled on "Mrs. Harry Pugh Smith," but whenever she tried to write as "Anita Blackmon," the magazine went out of business.

Mrs. Peabody says herself she is not always right, but we have yet to find her wrong. There is encouragement and cheer for everybody in a little book she has written, called "Light On Your Path," and readers who are interested may obtain this book by sending twenty-five cents in U. S. stamps, money order, or coin, to this office. Address "Light On Your Path," care of ALL-STORY, 280 Broadway, New York.

We aren't going to print any letters of criticism this week, because we have an amusing letter about that necessary and useful, but generally unlovely feature, the human nose, to consider. It is from a young girl in Holland.

DEAR EDITOR:

I and my girl colleagues of the firm in which I am employed are very anxious to know what kind of girl's nose—size, shape, etc.—is considered in America as the most attractive and able to dazzle young men.

We are of opinion that a girl's nose, provided it is a nice one, has very much influence in the game of flirting and making love. My own nose is considered by several young men as being very attractive. Here follows the description my boy gives that nasal feature of mine: "It is not too long, but dear me, I am happy, not too short either. It is nice and soft, with a delightful blunt tip, ever so slightly tilted." In fact, my boy is very much in love with my nose! Sometimes he says, "I could marry you for your delightful snub nose alone." My girl friends are also of opinion that nice noses are of very much influence. You know, perhaps, that the ancient authors were of the same opinion; they said: "If Cleopatra's nose had been an inch shorter (or longer) the history of the world would have changed."

So as this nose question is of so mighty importance on girls' lives, it is worthy to be told of now and then in those fine love stories of your magazine.

NOSEY ANNIE.

The suggestion is original, at least, whatever else one may think of it. And we certainly agree that an inch more, or an inch less, of nose would be enough to spoil anybody's face.

Our next novelette is "Luck Is What You Make It," by Harmony Haynes. It is said that anything can happen in Hollywood, and often has, and this is one of the stories that happened there. The little extra girl who is the heroine of the story (and never gets to be a star, incidentally!) is a friend of Harmony's, and when she gave her permission to be written up in print, she said, "Write it sweet—the way I see it." We hope you will agree with us that Harmony has "written it sweet."

By
RUTH LYONS

Run After Your Man

Girls who try modern methods shouldn't be surprised when they get modern results

HE lounged comfortably at her side on the long divan, and she prayed, "Please, please, let him take me in his arms and kiss me."

But he lazily flicked the ashes from his cigarette and said, "It's nice being with you."

Nice! Nice! When she was so torn up with longing for him that it was painful being so near him? What did a

girl do when she wanted to be kissed? Ask for it?

She leaned closer to him; and he straightened up to stamp out his cigarette in the ash tray.

He said, "Oh, I've been meaning to tell you, Gerry. I'm going away tomorrow. Up to the mountain lodge for a rest."

She said dismally, "Oh, Teddy!" Then, breathlessly, "Can't I go with you?"

He laughed with a shade of embarrassment. "My dear young lady, you know not what you say. Them's bachelor quarters. And the neighboring natives are a gossipy lot."

She gave him a malicious sideways glance. "Well, if you act the way you're acting tonight they won't have anything to talk about."

He laughed then, and turned to her, taking her in his arms. She melted against him, turning to fiery weakness under the touch of his lips.

"There," he said. "Is that better?"

She wanted to say, "Don't talk. Kiss me again." And as he did so she thought, "This is the tenth time he's kissed me."

She had counted every one. They were easy to count. He kissed her so seldom.

Of course, she didn't see him very often. This was only her eighth date with him in two months. Why did she have to fall so abysmally in love with him? Why couldn't she be as casual and friendly as he, instead of getting all torn up in this idiotic way?

Why didn't he fall in love with her? She knew she was pretty, knew she was as well groomed as the girls in his set. It couldn't be just because he was wealthy, and she was merely a girl from a plain family who worked for a living; and a good living at that.

People didn't think about things like that any more, did they? If she should be put among a group of girls from his crowd, no one could tell the difference. And she was far prettier than most girls; she knew that.

If he didn't like her, why did he come to see her? She couldn't bear to whisper even to herself that perhaps he came to see her just to waste time.

He kissed her again and she clung to him, until she noticed that he was glancing at his wrist watch. She drew away and stared at him with reproachful, hurt eyes.

He said, "Sorry, darling, I didn't know it was so late. I'll have to blow. Leaving early in the morning."

After he had gone she beat madly against the soft cushions of the divan, wishing she could beat Teddy Maxwell instead. She got up and stared dismally at her reflection in a mirror.

She saw the lovely ice-blue satin gown that hadn't made the effect on Teddy that she had expected it would. Then the cloudy, fair hair that clung to her head like a demure cap, and ended in a twisted golden knot at the nape of her neck. The large gray eyes that were incredibly ringed with silky black lashes, above which arched the delicate curve of dark brows. The creamy skin, tenderly curved red lips; even a most unusual dimple high in her cheek.

She turned away and sighed. What good was her beauty, or the lovely clothes she selected with such care?

Before she met Teddy Maxwell she had been so proud of her job as assistant buyer in the large department store, had felt so fortunate that it enabled her to get such really grand clothes at a discount. But what good did it do? She might as well be dressed in sackcloth.

The idea popped into her head during one moment of the long, agonizing hours that it took her to go to sleep that night. And she sat up in bed and turned on the light.

It was a stark, raving mad idea, but she thought tremblingly, "For once I'll do something insane, and maybe it will get me more than sitting back and waiting."

In few words, she would go up to Cantwell, where Teddy's lodge was, and pop in on him. Just walk in and say, "Now what are you going to do about me?"

She'd just stay there until they had the thing out. She had to know. Maybe she'd be compromised and he'd have to marry her. She giggled a little at the absurd idea of the natives tarring and feathering Teddy for luring a young girl up to his lonely lodge.

Then she sobered and thought, "Perhaps up there alone with me, he'll really see that I'm desirable. I'll make him love me. He must! I don't care if it is a shameless thing to do. If he sends me away, at least I'll know that it's over with, and I can spend the rest of my life trying to forget."

The idea was still firmly implanted in her mind the next day, and she told the department head that she was taking a vacation. She hadn't had a vacation that summer, and here it was December. She was certainly entitled to a holiday.

THE following day she was on a train, northward bound, two bags packed with chic sports clothes at her side. She was hot and cold with nervousness, and her hands trembled. But she told herself fiercely that she wasn't going to think about anything until she got there.

She alighted from the train at the small Cantwell station, and shivered under her raccoon coat. The platform was deserted, snow piled in deep drifts around the small station house. She saw a dilapidated old car with a sign, "Taxi" hanging on the windshield, and she told the driver to take her to the Maxwell Lodge. She thought he looked at her oddly, and she said, suddenly panic-stricken, "Isn't anyone there?"

He nodded. "Yes'm. They's someone there."

Twenty minutes later he was pointing out the lodge to her, going up the driveway, and she was too nervous to appreciate its beauty fully, to admire the stately pines which surrounded it.

She was standing at the door, with her bags beside her, when she heard the car start, and she turned around quickly and called to him. She wanted to run away; she couldn't stay here. But it was too late! The door was being opened.

She braced herself for the shock of seeing Teddy, and then didn't know whether to be glad or sorry that it wasn't he who opened the door. This was a tall, broad-shouldered young man with stiff black hair and shining black eyes, dressed in a red sweater and corduroy trousers.

He was frowning at her, and she managed to say weakly, "May—may I come in?"

He held the door open for her and she walked feebly in, feeling alternately hot and cold. She went across the huge living room, and stood before the blazing fireplace.

He said curtly, "Well?"

She started, and said falteringly, "Is Teddy—Teddy Maxwell here?"

"Nope," he said laconically.

She cried, "But he must be! Are you sure?"

He said lazily, "Quite sure. I'm staying here alone. Taking care of the place."

She cried out at that, and sank into a chair, shivering.

He said sharply, "What's the matter? You ill?"

"I don't know," she answered dully. "I feel hot and cold and dizzy."

Instantly he had strong, competent fingers on her forehead, her wrist. After a while he said, "You have fever. A touch of grippe, I suppose." His brows drew together. "You'd better get to bed."

She got up shakily, reaching for her bags, but he stopped her.

"Don't be f-o-o-l-i-s-h," he said. "There's no train until tomorrow. You might as well stay here. You'll be all right in a day or so."

With an effort she drew herself up and flashed an angry look at him.

He said irritably, "Why don't you stop acting up? What do you think I am? You're perfectly safe here. It's impossible to think of going out in that weather."

She sank back into her chair. "Oh, I suppose you're right."

What difference did anything make now? Teddy had lied to her. He hadn't come up here at all. He was just giving her a large dose of air, and she was too dumb to know it.

She burst into tears. "Everything has gone wrong. Everything!"

He said, "Stop acting like a baby!" and picked her up easily in his strong arms and carried her up the stairs to the gallery that ran around the large main room of the house. He took her into one of the bedrooms off the gallery and placed her on the bed.

"Take a hot bath," he ordered, "and get into bed. You'll find aspirin in the bathroom."

FOR three days he nursed her, while her temperature ran high, and strength was squeezed from her, leaving her weak and listless. She talked a lot, and some of the time she didn't know what she was saying. On the third day she was feeling more rational, and she thought he regarded her with an odd look.

She said, "I suppose you wonder what I'm doing up here?"

He shrugged, and his face creased into a broad grin that showed white, even teeth and made him distinctly attractive. She was gazing at him with rapt wonder, realizing for the first time that he was attractive, when he said, "I'm your doctor, not your lawyer."

She thought, "All right, smartie." And then she said quickly, "What are *you* doing here? You're not a native, and you're certainly not a caretaker by profession."

He smiled wryly. "Oh, I've always had to work. I'm not a caretaker, by profession, as you put it. I'm an engineer. Worked my way through college; that's where I met Ted Maxwell. I'm going to South America on a job in the spring, and I was at loose ends in the meantime, so Maxwell offered me this job to tide me over."

She wanted to ask him a lot of questions about Teddy Maxwell, wanted to talk about him, but she said merely, "Oh," not knowing what else to say. Then, "I'm Geraldine Thomas."

He said, "I'm Lance Goodwin. Now go to sleep. You're talking too much."

Her cheeks burned with indignation after he had left. He was positively rude. He didn't seem to realize that she was a human being, and an attractive girl besides. She tossed and turned restlessly in the bed, wondering what evil fate had prompted her to make this

ridiculous journey, wondering what she was going to do next.

The next morning she got out of bed early. She wanted to be up on her feet, meet her rude host on his own level.

She dressed carefully and slowly, noting with relief that her illness had not impaired her appearance as she had feared. When she had finished, she surveyed the result with satisfaction. She was beautiful. Perhaps Mr. Lance Goodwin would be a little less impersonal now.

And then her heart cried, "Teddy, Teddy, why aren't you here? Why have you done this to me?"

She found Lance in the kitchen, squeezing oranges, and she stood poised in the doorway until he looked up. She waited for the flash of admiration that she expected to cross his face, but instead his eyes hardened, and he said gruffly, "What are you doing up?"

She kept her anger out of her tone. "I'll feel better out of bed."

He turned back to the oranges. "All right. Breakfast will be ready in a little while."

She stood for a moment, feeling like a child whose ears had been boxed. Then, burning with indignation, she turned swiftly and went from the room.

All day she tried to keep Teddy from her thoughts, tried to forget that her heart was breaking, tried to forget that after this she could never see him again.

She thought, "It's my own stupid fault. If I had sat and waited, he might have come back to me. Why couldn't he at least have been here? Why must everything go wrong?

"But even if he did come here, what chance would I have had with him, anyway? I seem to have about as much lure as a rag doll. I can't even make an impression on the caretaker." And she laughed bitterly to herself.

At dinner Lance was quiet and uncommunicative. She said finally, "I'll be leaving tomorrow."

He glanced up at her indifferently. "You'll have to stay a few days until you're completely recovered. After that you may leave any time you wish." He got up from the table, terminating the conversation, and she clenched her fists tightly together in anger, thinking, "I'll teach him a lesson."

He must be made to see that she was an attractive girl, a very desirable girl. She must make him lose that stupid indifference.

It wasn't that she had the slightest bit of interest in him, but she needed some attention to bolster up her pride. She laughed mirthlessly, thinking that she couldn't interest even this ill-mannered boor, and she had hoped to make Teddy fall in love with her.

For the next few days she concentrated on the problem of Lance Goodwin. She thought, "I'm absolutely shameless, continuing to stay here in this house with a strange man. If anyone knew, my reputation wouldn't be worth a plugged nickel.

"But what difference does it make? Everything's over now. I don't care about anything now that I know there's no chance with Teddy. Why can't I hate him? Why must I keep on loving him, when I know it's hopeless, and so terribly painful?"

She used every little feminine trick she knew to interest Lance Goodwin, and she knew that he was becoming more and more aware of her as a person, because she would find his dark eyes intent on her. He would move away from her a little too quickly, try too obviously to avoid touching her.

She felt a keen joy at these signs.

She said breathlessly, "I just happened to be here, and I thought I'd play a little joke on you, and serve your dinner"

She'd have him where she wanted him yet. Just as soon as he made a move she'd laugh at him and walk out.

ONE afternoon she was helping him in the kitchen, and for the fifth time in the space of a half hour she brushed closely against him in passing. He suddenly turned on her, and she was startled by the expression on his dark face. He caught her wrist in a grip that hurt.

He said through gritted teeth, "All right! You asked for it. Now you can take your medicine."

And then he had her in his arms,

bruising her mouth with hard, hurting kisses, his hands pressing deeply into her flesh. She tried to pull her lips away, but he only gathered her closer while she moaned faintly.

She felt suffocated, and there was a fiery flame running through her. She realized with horror that his kisses awoke a burning thrill in her, and she beat madly against him with her puny fists.

He released her mouth for a moment, and said contemptuously, "Why are you struggling? This is what you want, isn't it? You've been asking for it. I know your type. But this time you're not getting away with it. There's no use struggling, because I'm perfectly ruthless."

Then he was bruising her mouth again with his kisses. If he didn't stop soon—

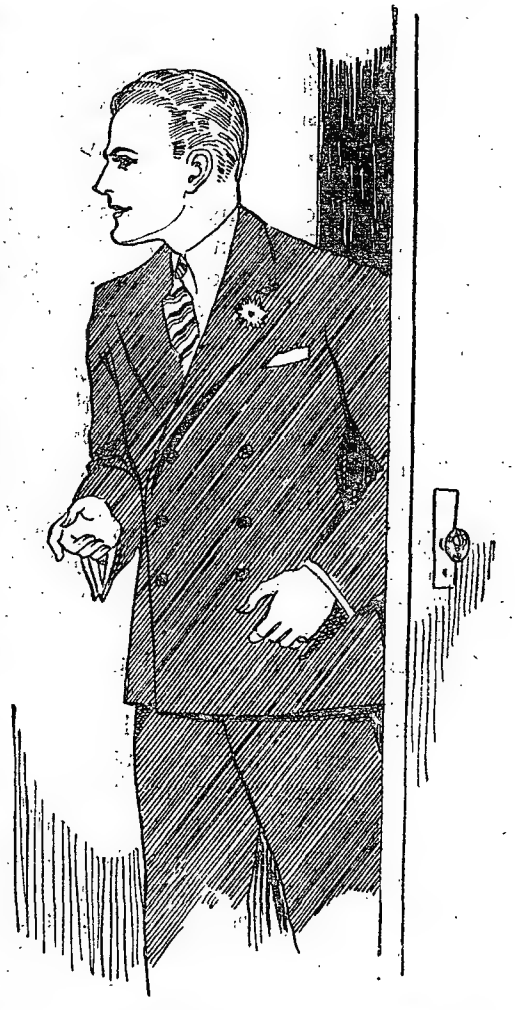
But his kisses didn't stop, and they burned deeply into her, turning her knees to water, making her writhe with shame at her own weakness.

And then the telephone rang. Its clamor shrilled through the house, startling them both to immobility. His hands dropped from her, and she swayed weakly to a chair, grasping it firmly with both hands.

He drew his hand across his flushed face, breathing deeply. Then he gave her one long look that she couldn't quite fathom, but she was sure it held something of contempt and mockery. With that he went out of the room.

She lowered herself to the chair, pressing her hands to her burning face, feeling shame and indignation wash over her. She heard his voice at the telephone and a shudder raced through her. She would have to get away, now, immediately, before he came back.

But she was still sitting in the chair when he reëntered the room.



Teddy had a strange little smile on his lips. How much had he guessed of her plan?

He said coldly, "That was Ted Maxwell. He's on his way up here with a party of friends."

Teddy! *Teddy!* On his way here. With a party of friends. Her heart beat suffocatingly in her breast. She'd have to leave immediately.

She turned with panic to Lance Goodwin. "Please take me to the station right away. I've got to leave!"

He looked at her oddly. He said coldly, "You've missed the only train.

You might as well stay. He's a friend of yours, isn't he?"

A friend! Why couldn't she laugh? Why couldn't she be casual? She sat there shivering, clasping and unclasping her hands.

Well, why not? There was nothing she could do. She'd have to face him. Perhaps she could do something clever, could carry off the situation. Make him think it was just a lark.

She said breathlessly to Lance, "Have you any aprons around that I can wear? I want to play a joke on him. I'll help you in the kitchen, pretend that I'm the maid."

He shrugged and pointed to a linen closet, and she was soon rummaging through the linen until she found a starched apron.

It seemed no time at all until she heard the car roaring up the driveway. She gazed through the kitchen window, her heart hammering dreadfully. She saw Lance Goodwin, standing tall and straight in the snow while the car pulled up, and then the car, crowded with people, came into her vision. But there was only one face which she saw.

The sight of Teddy sent a wild thrill dancing through her, and she clutched hard at the window sill. He was clad in an expensive-looking tweed coat, hatless, his fair hair rumpled by the wind. He was laughing that gay, infectious laugh that she loved so well, and pumping Lance's hand, introducing his guests.

Only then did Gerry glance at his companions. There were two girls and two men; nice looking, well dressed people. But they held no interest for her; they were merely background for Teddy.

As they started toward the house she pulled herself away from the window and went back to her task of paring vegetables, her hands trembling furiously. Soon now he would see her, and then—

Lance came into the kitchen and, without a word, commenced preparations for dinner. Only then did she remember what had happened earlier in the day. She despised him. She'd like to make him grovel, beg for her forgiveness. She went hot with the memory of his kisses.

When the dinner was prepared, and the table set, Lance, with an odd expression, told Gerry she could serve the dinner. She hadn't counted on that and she said quickly, "Oh, no!"

He said bruskly, "You'll have to. I have things to do out here."

She glared at him, and then, with chin held high, and wildly beating heart, she carried dishes into the dining room. She would die if Teddy should look up and speak to her. She was panic-stricken, and she never afterward knew how she managed to set down plates without spilling their contents.

Teddy and his guests, fortified with cocktails, were chattering and laughing gaily, and in the dim candlelight she realized that no one noticed her. Her relief was so great she almost smiled. But this couldn't go on forever. Any moment now—

WHEN dinner was finished and the guests had retired to the living room, she cleared the table and went about washing dishes. Lance methodically put away things and cleaned up. She heard the door behind her open, and breathed a relieved sigh, thinking that Lance had gone from the room.

But immediately she heard a deep voice boom, "Well, Lance, that was a

grand meal," and her heart stopped dead.

It was Teddy's voice! Her hands remained motionless in the dishwater while he went on, "I didn't know you could cook like that. You know, you don't have to do that, old man. Can't you get somebody around here to cook?"

Lance said, "Oh, I like it, and anyway, there's not much to do around here. I have to earn my keep some way."

Teddy said, "Well, it's up to you." Then, in a puzzled, lowered voice, "I see you've got somebody new."

Gerry turned around at that. She had to turn around. She would have to face him some time, and this was as good a moment as any, with no one around but Lance.

She was wondering if he could hear the beating of her heart when she saw quick amazement flash over his face.

"Gerry!" he exclaimed.

She said quickly, breathlessly, "I happened to be up around here, and I thought I'd play a little joke on you. But you didn't even notice me when I served the dinner."

There was a strange light in his eyes, a peculiar smile tugging at his lips.

She thought, "He's not angry. He's not a bit angry."

He said, still with that strange expression in his eyes, "Swell! Come on in and meet the party."

She was somewhat taken aback by that. It seemed too easy. And, noticing her reluctance, he went over and took her hands in his. "Really, Gerry, I'm awfully glad you're here. Take off that apron and come into the other room."

She followed him obediently, thinking, "Oh, Teddy, my love, you're not angry. You're letting me stay. You're so sweet, and I love you so much."

He introduced her to the rest of the guests who were seated around the fireplace sipping their after-dinner coffee. He said, "This is an old friend of mine. She was pulling a gag on us tonight, playing servant."

They smiled pleasantly and made room for her, and her heart seemed bursting with love and gratitude toward Teddy for making things so easy.

He sat beside her and looked long into her starry gray eyes. He whispered, "What have you done to yourself? You look positively ravishing."

She thrilled under his praise, gazing up at him smilingly from under her silky lashes.

The firelight flickered across their faces, the group of boys and girls talked in lazy, well-modulated voices, and it seemed to Gerry that she must have died and gone to Heaven. It was too perfect. Too unbearably perfect.

She said good night to Teddy at the foot of the stairs leading to the gallery. The others had already gone up, one of the girls, Gloria Baxter, giving Teddy a long, strange look when she went. But Teddy had held Gerry back.

He said now, his shining eyes fastened on her face, "What luck, finding you here! I rather expected I'd be bored, coming up, but now everything's perfect."

She smiled tremulously at him, not trusting herself to speak. And suddenly he caught both her hands in his and was whispering, "Lovely thing, I'm going to kiss you."

When his lips found hers, gently, insistently, she thought, "This time he's really kissing me. Not looking at a watch at the same time. This is what a kiss should be. Not brutal and insulting, like Lance's kisses."

And, thinking of Lance, she shud-

dered a little, and Teddy's arms tightened around her. His kisses were becoming more and more fervent, and her heart was beating wildly with a confusion of alarm and delight.

A light snapped on in the center of the room, and Teddy released her suddenly as they heard Lance say, "Oh, I'm sorry, I just wanted to see that everything was all right for the night."

Teddy laughed good-naturedly. "That's all right, Lance. I'll take care of things."

But the interruption had brought sanity to Gerry as a rush of cold air revives a fainting person, and she had started up the stairs. But not before she had seen the glance of contempt that Lance had shot at her.

That look troubled her, and it persisted in obtruding into her thrilling thoughts of Teddy. What right had Lance Goodwin to look at her that way? She hated him. And she fell asleep murmuring Teddy's name over and over to herself.

THE next two days were Heaven for Gerry. The other guests accepted her cordially, with the exception of Gloria Baxter, who paid scant attention to her.

Teddy never left her side. They went skiing and skating and tobogganing, and sometimes Lance went along with them.

Gerry seldom spoke to him. She didn't make it too obvious, just avoided him whenever possible. When she did speak to him it was to give him an order of some kind, and she found a great deal of satisfaction in treating him like a servant.

She was extremely haughty with him, and when she saw that her actions had no effect on him except to make him curl his lips into that mocking smile, she clenched her fists angrily together. He was an impudent, rude boor. She would like a chance to make him suffer.

She noticed that Gloria Baxter was very cool to Teddy. She took every opportunity to make cutting remarks to him, and though he pretended indifference, Gerry felt that he resented it.

She said to him once, "Why does Gloria avoid us?" And he said, "Oh, she's just a mean-minded little wench. Jealous of you, I suppose, for no reason at all."

So Gerry put her out of her mind. She wasn't going to let anything spoil this heavenly holiday.

One day while they were skating, Teddy whispered to her, "Let's get away from the crowd. We'll get the cutter out and go for a ride."

She nodded and they slipped away from the others.

Teddy harnessed the horse to the cutter and handed her up into the seat. He jumped up beside her and soon they were off, the horse clopping over the frozen road, the cutter gliding along swiftly in the deep ruts.

Gerry stretched her arms outward, laughed exultantly. "I love this!" she cried.

Teddy pulled the horse to a standstill and dropped the reins. His hands caught hers and held them against his chest. "Is that all you love?" he asked softly.

She stared at him, her eyes wide, a little frightened at the expression on his face. He put his arm around her and pulled her to him, lifting up her face to his.

"Tell me," he demanded. "Do you love me?"

"Oh, yes," she whispered. "Oh, yes, Teddy."

His mouth covered hers and he

strained her to him. She relaxed in his arms, answering his kisses with a wild passion. "I don't care," she thought. "I don't care what happens. I've got to have him."

He murmured, "Oh, Gerry, you beautiful thing! I've got to have you. Got to. Listen, darling, let's run away some place for a few days. We'll leave the rest here and go off by ourselves. It'll be such grand fun. And I've got to have you now. I won't let you get away from me."

She was leaning against him, trembling a little at his words. The moment had come. The moment she had hoped for.

She buried her face against his coat. She said haltingly after a moment, "You're not—you're not proposing marriage, are you?" It wasn't a question.

He pulled her more tightly to him. "Sweetheart, sweetheart, we can't talk about that now. You might get tired of me in no time at all.

"Let's see how it works out, and then we'll think about that later. We'll go off somewhere now for a few days. I know just the place. Don't let's think about the practical side of things now. There's so little time to waste, and I'm so mad about you. Gerry, Gerry, tell me you're mine. Say yes, that you'll go with me."

He kissed her again, demandingly, possessively, and she felt all reason washed away in a wave of passion. She clung to him, saying weakly, "Yes, Teddy, yes. Anything you say."

He hugged her ecstatically. He was like a child with a new toy. He picked up the reins and clucked to the horse. He beamed down on Gerry, dropping a light kiss on her forehead.

"We'll go back and put some things in a bag, and sneak away in the car before anyone knows we're gone. Darling, what fun we'll have! I'm so happy it's wicked!"

She tried to match his mood, but she could only smile quietly at him. She was thrilled, no doubt about it, but it was a frightened sort of thrill.

She thought, "What am I doing?" And then she said to herself, "I can't give him up, now that I know he cares for me. It will work out some way. I'll make him love me so he'll never want to leave me. I love him, and that must make it all right. And I want him as much as he wants me."

So she smiled gaily at him, trying not to think that she was arguing with herself, trying to convince herself.

Soon they were flying over the road and laughing together. But her throat felt a little tight when she laughed.

He left the horse, still harnessed to the cutter, outside the barn, and together they ran to the house, like two culprits fleeing from justice. He kissed her at the door and said, "Hurry, darling," and went on to his own room.

FOR a moment she stared distractedly around her room, and then, with furious haste, threw clothes into a bag. She wouldn't think. She had made her decision and everything was going to be grand and glorious.

She ran down the stairs, bag clutched tightly in her hand, and was hurrying toward the door when she turned to face Lance Goodwin. The sight of him was a distinct shock. She said, "Oh!" and dropped her bag.

He picked it up, handed it to her. His face wore a peculiar scowl. He said briefly, "Leaving?"

She stared at him distractedly, unaccountably feeling an urge to tell him everything. Then, because she was

afraid she might do just that, she turned quickly from him and ran out of the door.

Teddy was waiting in the open touring car. He jumped out and helped her in, squeezing her arm as he did so. She heard the house door slam again, but she didn't look back as the car started.

She was thinking, "Lance, do you know what I'm doing? Did you guess? Now what do you think of me? This ought to make you despise me more than ever."

The car skidded out of the driveway, and Teddy slowed the motor. He said, "I'm afraid this is going to be tough driving. This snow and ice is like glass, and those darn ruts make it worse."

She sat beside him silently, shivering under her raccoon coat. She should be feeling gay and happy and joyous. She should be thinking of Teddy, whom she loved, and not of Lance and the dark scowl on his face.

Teddy shouted above the wind, "Happy, darling?"

She said hesitantly, "Yes," and it was at that moment that she realized they were being followed.

She turned around in her seat, looked back, and her heart gave a wild lurch. Lance was sitting in the seat of the cutter, whipping the horse to speed, gaining on them inch by inch.

Involuntarily she cried, "Oh!" and Teddy turned around. His face tightened with vexation as he said, "What does that fool want? He's trying to catch us. Well, nothing's going to stop us now. We're on our way and I won't have any interference." He looked down at her with a grim smile. "I'm afraid you'll change your mind if we stop."

She said timidly, "Please stop, Teddy. See what he wants."

He laughed. "Don't be silly."

He put on more speed, and the car skidded crazily. Scowling, he slowed down.

The cutter was directly behind them now. Lance was standing up, swaying perilously, shouting, "Stop the car for a minute."

Gerry glanced fearfully at Teddy, saw his face bent over the wheel, irritation darkening his features, a sullen expression twisting his mouth. She was suddenly very much afraid. She timidly put her hand on his arm and said falteringly, "Please, please, Teddy, stop the car. I'm afraid."

He said shortly, "Don't be an idiot!"

The cutter was up to them now, the horse abreast of the car. She noticed with a frightened quickening of her pulse that Teddy was edging the car over to crowd the cutter off the road. She turned in her seat and shouted, "Lance, go back! Go back, please!"

But she saw his dark face set in grim, furious lines, and she knew he would not turn back. And the knowledge made her heart turn over in her breast in a terrifyingly thrilling way.

Teddy was urging the car further and further toward the edge of the road. She saw with panic that there was a steep bank on that side. If he should upset the cutter!

EVERYTHING happened so quickly that she didn't know it was taking place. There was a sharp swerve of the car, then suddenly a shout. Then the clatter of the overturned cutter, followed by the frightened squealing of the horse.

Gerry clung, panic-stricken, to the car door, while the automobile righted itself back into the ruts. Then she screamed, "Stop the car! Stop the car this instant. Stop it, I say!"

He said, "Don't be silly, Gerry. He'll be all right. If we don't get away quick he'll be after us. We have to lose him."

She said contemptuously, "What a terrible person you are! Let me out immediately. You might have hurt him badly."

He said smoothly, "Now, come on, darling, don't get excited. You can't hurt old Lance, He had no business following us, spoiling our getaway."

Gerry had her hand on the handle of the door, and before he had finished speaking she had opened it and jumped. She landed in the snow at the roadside, lay there for a moment, shaken and bruised. Then she was on her feet, running and stumbling down the road to the place where Lance had been thrown over.

Glancing back, she saw the car still going on, and realized with relief that the road was too narrow for it to turn. Teddy would have to go on a mile or so before he could turn the car around.

She saw the dark mass in the snow at the foot of the bank, and, stumbling and sliding, she followed down after it. The horse was struggling frantically to get to its feet, but her glance flew beyond it to the still figure sprawled in a drift of snow.

She ran to him, a sob in her throat, and tugged at his heavy body until she had pulled him out of the snow. Then, kneeling down, she turned him gently over. There was a gash on the side of his head with blood trickling from it.

She picked up a handful of snow, and began rubbing it briskly across his forehead, over his face. He moaned finally and opened his eyes.

He sat up weakly, gingerly touching his head. "What happened?" he mumbled.

But she was busy dabbing at the wound with a handkerchief, tearing off the silk scarf from her neck and binding it around his head.

"You're all right, Lance, aren't you?" she whispered.

He was fully conscious now, and he looked at her, a queer light in his eyes. "You came after me," he said softly.

"Of course," she cried. "Now you stay here while I help the horse."

She was tugging valiantly at the horse and the cutter when Lance slowly got to his feet, shaking his head as if to brush away the dizziness. He went to her and put her gently aside.

When he had the horse once more on its feet and the cutter righted again, he turned to her.

She said, looking away from him, "Why did you follow us?"

He busied himself with the harness. "When I saw you leaving with your bag I guessed— And I thought you ought to know that he's engaged to Gloria Baxter. I felt I had to stop you and tell you that. They've had a quarrel. They're always having quarrels, and he tries to make her jealous with some other girl."

She was thinking, "That's why he used to come to see me. When he'd had a quarrel with Gloria." And she knew that it didn't matter now. Teddy and Gloria were unimportant to her. She had a passing moment of contempt for hersef that she hadn't guessed.

And then she groaned inwardly. If Lance ever knew what she had almost done! She shuddered, and knew she would move heaven and earth to prevent him from ever knowing.

He was going on, "I was afraid something like this might happen. When you were ill you talked a lot about him, about making up your mind to get him. It made me sick to hear a girl talk that way."

She flushed, hanging her head. "I know," she whispered. "You're right. But I had been so terribly in love with him, or in love with an idea of him, I guess it was—"

He said, "I knew your type the minute I saw you. Spoiled darling. Must have all the comforts of life. Willing to marry for money, but not for love unless money went along with it.

"You wouldn't be interested in a hard-working guy with only prospects to offer. You're a snob, because you're in that set. I could tell all that the first time I laid eyes on you, and that's why I hated you."

"You're crazy," she said huskily. "I'm only a working girl. I earn a good salary, so I can dress well. What did you mean, that's why you hated me?"

"Because I knew I would fall in love with you, that's why."

She went close to him and placed a trembling hand on his arm. She looked up at him and her eyes shone like the sun on snow. She whispered, "Oh, Lance, you didn't—you can't—Lance, tell me, do you love me?"

"Of course, idiot," he said gruffly.

She leaned against him rapturously, and his arms went quickly, fiercely around her. She sighed.

"I guess I loved you from the first too. That's why I resented you so much. Because I thought I wanted something else, then." She held up her face. "Kiss me, darling. I've always wanted to go to South America."

Love at Dawn

WHERE the violets were cold with dew,
Just at dawn I walked with you.
Far below our cliff, the sea
Shouted and leaped in ecstasy.
Cold with dew the violets stood,
Still and lovely in our wood.
Never a wind was on the hill;
We climbed and struggled on, until
We reached the peak, and saw, below,
The earth. The sky was white as snow.
You took me in your arms. I knew
All that you vowed to me was true.
I gave my heart into your keeping,
There at dawn when the world was sleeping,
While fragrance of violets and the sea
Mingled with your kiss to me!

—Mary Carolyn Davies

"Get wise to yourself," said Vera. "Nobody ever sticks around home"

She had to camouflage her feelings, and sell her kisses, for she was only a

Party Girl

By MARGARET WAITE

FOR the first time in two months, the convertible studio couch was actually closed up to look like a studio couch, and the modernistic screen designed to hide the gas plate actually fulfilled its mission.

Gayle Travis, dancing about in a frivolous gown and shining gold san-

dals, surveyed the result gleefully. For the first time since she had come to New York, there was a definite and very delightful reason for tidying the tiny apartment.

Tonight there would be guests!

She surveyed herself in the mirror and found the result flawless. Gay blue eyes that sparkled in anticipated merriment. Dusky hair that escaped from its prim coiffure in irrepressible little tendrils. A swift gamin's smile.

The days were past when she would spend evening after evening alone, wondering bitterly why people wrote so deceivingly about the gay adventures that befell girls who came to the city. After Vera moved in, her evenings would sparkle just like the story book evenings.

Vera Lennox was the most colorful girl in Gayle's office. Gayle had definitely disliked her at first. The impossible shade of her thick red hair, the scarlet finger nails, her loud laughter, all had registered unpleasantly in Gayle's mind.

But in time she came to admire the older girl for her sophistication, her self-assurance, her ready wit. For the vivid clothes she wore and the orchids that were delivered to her desk. Vera represented to her then, in concentrated form, the New York girl of the story books.

Now Vera had made friendly overtures. That very morning she had sidled over to Gayle's desk to say, "Doing anything tonight, kid?"

"No," she replied, trying to camouflage the eagerness that sprang unbidden from her heart up into her voice.

"How would you like a little party? My boy friend has a friend. They're a couple of good eggs, and they'll show us a good time if we treat them right. How about it?"

"Sounds grand."

"It's a date then. Be ready at seven. Dress for cocktails, dinner and a show."

Cocktails, dinner and a show! Could any other three words hold such glamour?

"By the way, where do you live, kid?"

Gayle gave her the address.

"Tudor City? Gee! You're lucky! Wish I lived somewhere near civilization. I'm over in Brooklyn, you know, and I might just as well be dead. Do you live alone?"

"Yes. You see, I don't know many people."

"Ever think you'd like a roommate? Listen, kid, how about us pairing up?"

"Why, I'd love it."

Gay Vera for a roommate! Parties, laughter, exciting new adventures!

Vera surveyed her thoughtfully. "What are you giving for rent?" she asked.

"I pay fifty dollars a month."

"Swell! That's twenty-five dollars apiece if we share it. How about furniture?"

The time had come now for Gayle to cease regretting the extravagant but charming furniture she had put in her little apartment. From now on there would be people to see it and enjoy it.

"I have everything we'll need, and of course I'll be glad to share it."

Gayle hummed a light tune that evening after work as she waited for a Fifth Avenue bus. She seemed now a definite part of the great city. As the crowds passed—those laughing men and women who throng Fifth Avenue in the swank Fifties—she felt herself one of them.

Radio City's great tower, rising fantastically out of its weird spotlights, shed glamorous enchantment out into

the warm spring evening. Gayle smiled up at it challengingly.

THE long, skinny hand to the clock pointed waggishly at seven. Almost simultaneously the bell rang, and Gayle, with a final glance about to see that everything was just right, danced to the door to admit Vera and the two exciting strangers.

To her disappointment, Vera stood there alone—a very flamboyant Vera in a leopard coat, burdened with bags and hatboxes of all descriptions.

"Well, here I am, child! Bag and baggage."

She dropped her luggage unceremoniously on the floor long enough to toss off her fur coat and light a cigarette.

Gayle stared at her a moment in amazement, then, with a belated sense of hospitality, recovered her poise.

"Welcome home," she said with a forced little laugh.

Swiftly, Vera and her belongings dominated the little apartment. Grotesque, long-legged dolls were soon lolling about on every available chair. Framed magazine covers and photographs of picture stars hung about the walls in garish contrast to Gayle's fine etchings.

"We'll get bright cretonne for the windows, and fix things up real cheery," Vera announced, calmly appropriating every clothes hanger in the closet. Gayle's dresses seemed to fade into insignificance, crowded in with the other girl's voluminous and pretentious wardrobe.

"You don't act very happy over this arrangement," Vera paused at length to observe.

"Of course I am," Gayle protested. "I think it's going to work out beautifully. But I didn't know you were coming tonight. I was a little surprised."

"Listen, baby! Nobody ever knows *what* I'm going to do! That's one of the nice things about me."

Gayle laughed. Life with Vera would be a bit hectic, but exciting. There would be no dull moments around this girl, who acted with a suddenness that made one want to dodge; who had, revolving about her, a continuous circle of gayety.

True, the partnership would not be without its disadvantages, such as the long-legged dolls and those "cheery" cretonne curtains. But other things would more than recompense. Each month there would be twenty-five dollars in savings on the rent. She would figure on using that for the new clothes she would need to go around in Vera's crowd.

"Your friends are late?" she ventured timidly at length.

Vera looked up from the dresser where she was arranging quantities of greasy soiled-looking cosmetic containers in all shapes and sizes.

"Migosh, kid, you didn't think they were coming here, did you?"

Gayle's hands dropped slowly to her sides.

"Get wise to yourself," Vera pointed out stridently. "Nobody ever sticks around home. Home's just a place to crawl into at night and recover from hangovers. It's bad policy to give a man the idea he can hang around your apartment evenings. Once you start that, he'll never take you anywhere.

"Let 'em understand they've got to take you out to expensive places; never let a man think you can be had cheap. We'll meet the boys tonight in the lobby of the Ritz."

Gayle looked on in silence as Vera wriggled into an elaborate dress. She

was thinking about a little house where she had once lived, a house that had a parlor and a living room. There had been a piano in the parlor and a radio in the living room, and every night the old high school gang overflowed those two rooms.

But that was back in Hazelton. The house was sold now, and the jolly, popular parents were both dead, and the old high school gang had scattered to the four corners of the country.

She felt a blue mood descending upon her. That would never do! Nobody should have the blues on the very brim of an evening with two strange and exciting men. She must talk, chatter lightly as Vera was doing.

"What's my boy friend like?" she asked.

Vera shrugged plump shoulders. "How should I know? I've never seen him. All I know is that he's disgustingly rich. Nick says he runs around with that Ritzy débutante crowd. He's engaged to one, as a matter of fact."

"That's bad. Do you suppose we could disengage him?"

A strange light came into Vera's eyes. "Listen, kid," she said, "it isn't any of our business whether he's engaged or not. Now don't fall for any of these fellows I'll be introducing you to. Just keep 'em happy and amused for one evening at a time. That's the way to get best results. I've had a lot of experience, and I know."

"I—I don't understand."

"Never mind. You will. And while we're on the subject, I want to give you some more pointers. I'll be pretty sore if you act the dumbbell and disgrace me. This party tonight is important. My boy friend wants to put over a real estate development of some sort. Probably it's crooked, but that isn't any of *my* business. Anyhow, your date has the jack that it'll take, so see that you put him in a good humor and keep him there.

"And one thing more: don't let 'em know we live together. It's bad policy to turn ourselves into Siamese twins."

Vera, with her vast knowledge of "policies" and results, was an enigma. Hard as nails, and a bit ruthless, yet she successfully managed to grasp and hold the friendship of many men.

Gayle looked at her with awe.

THE lobby of the hotel was crowded. Men with weariness and cynicism in their eyes were everywhere about. Gayle sought breathlessly for a face that held the glamour she sought, but it wasn't there.

Vera squeezed her arm. "There's Nick, but I don't seem to see the playboy friend."

Gayle glanced up and found herself looking directly into the weary, puffy eyes of a middle-aged man. At that moment she felt herself drowning in disillusion.

She stifled a panicky impulse to flee as Vera made the introductions.

"Her name is Gayle Travis, Nick. Isn't she a dear?"

"You telling *me*, Baby?" Nick Lucas demanded. "How long have you been holding out on us? Why didn't you spring her a long time ago?"

"Never mind, Swifty. What happened to the pal you've been bragging up?"

Nick cleared his throat. "Had to see a guy. He'll join us pretty quick, unless it turns out to be an old college friend."

At that precise moment, a very tall young man stepped from behind a pillar, smiled a history-making smile—and Gayle's life began.

"Never mind that line, Nick. I've seen the little lady, and she's all that could be desired. This looks like one blind date you won't have to lie to get me out of."

"He means you've passed the acid test," Vera explained to Gayle, who was almost in a trance.

It has been said that people never act quite so witless as when they fall in love. Gayle felt herself shriveling into blank stupidity under two eyes that were whimsically smiling, and very, very blue.

"Hi-de-hi and a couple of ho-de-ho's," said Nick. "Looks like we're off. How about a cocktail or six?"

"How about them ever?" Vera rejoined.

The elevator shot them upward to Nick's room. Wisecracks flew thick and fast between Vera and Nick, until a bellhop arrived with ginger ale. Two highballs, then, and they were necking.

Meanwhile, the tall young man with the blue eyes led Gayle to a window. "Your friend forgot to mention that my name is Haven Story."

"That's a nice name," she mused. "Half of it makes me think of coves, and lighthouses, and little boats tied up; and the other half makes me think of the things that really aren't."

"What if the things that really aren't should start to be *are?*"

Gayle turned swiftly. Was he laughing at her? But she found only friendliness in his eyes.

"They don't," she said briefly.

"The point is challenged. Suppose we wind back a few rounds and start over. Instead of telling you rather dully that my name is Haven Story, I said: 'Gayle, they made you out of sunshine and dew and a lot of music.' There! Now we've caught up, so we can go right ahead with the next: 'Gayle, could you possibly be as sweet as you look?'"

"Not possibly," she said, flashing him a merry smile. "It's an illusoin."

"You shouldn't say that," he objected. "It's out of character, and any self-respecting story book would kick. Now what you *should* tell me is something like this: 'Haven, my heart seems to be turning little handsprings whenever you turn on those soulful eyes of yours.'"

She blushed as she primly repeated his words, knowing how very true they were.

"Hey, you two!" It was Nick's coarse voice. "What is this anyhow? Play rehearsal?"

DINNER followed the cocktails. Dinner in the luxurious but coldly impersonal hotel dining room downstairs.

Gayle discovered things about Haven. Came upon them with a suddenness that left her breathless. The way he smiled *upward* out of his eyes, the quick attentive way his head bent to hers. His dark hair, growing in a clean-cut line from a broad brow.

Then the theater, where every commonplace line seemed sparkling and brilliant.

Then on to the Central Park Casino.

The dancers, the music, the jewels, all made magic out of the May night.

Gayle and her party sat at a table that overlooked one of the sunken gardens, dark and mysterious in the moonlight. Haven was smiling at her with a strange, deep tenderness in his eyes. Silently they watched the dancers inside, and the night without, as Vera and Nick kept up their running fire of wisecracks.

Then Vera noted how quiet Gayle and Haven were, and quickly con-

cluded they were bored. "Wake up, Gayle!" she shouted. "Be alive to what goes on about you! Just for instance, the lil lady you see over there by that table—the one with the two-ton diamond bracelet—is your little ducky's fiancée."

Gayle saw the stern line that tightened Haven's jaw. Her eyes followed Vera's boldly pointing finger to a girl whose face she had seen many times in the society sections of the papers. It was an arresting face that one would easily remember: thin almost to emaciation, and fine-featured.

It had appeared first when Ellen Janeway was débutante; then throughout a series of Junior League activities; and finally with the announcement of her engagement and approaching marriage to somebody or other. A somebody who had meant nothing to Gayle then; everything to her now.

"She's jealous of you, Gayle," Vera babbled on. "I know it by the look in her eye."

"Look here," Haven interrupted grimly. "You're mixing your parties; that's as bad as mixing your drinks."

Gayle glanced up at him swiftly in the electric moment that followed; tried to pierce the veil that hung between them. Did he love this exquisite Dresden China girl? Was that dear moment he had filled with swift, sudden rapture just a charming interlude?

Of course. That was all it could be. The girl's name was beside his in the papers, on invitation lists, in people's minds. How else could it be?

Vera's voice was plunging on a bit unsteadily. "And she'd like to choke that Morley Dane. He's the handsome little fellow with the pink cheeks and the drunken gestures."

Nick became interested. "Looks like he's the fly in the whole party's ointment," he observed.

"Say, listen, sweetheart; no wisecracks about Morley Dane. Our little Gayle has a date with him tomorrow night. He thinks she's O. K. Gave me the high sign jus' a minute ago."

Gayle stared at her in open amazement. Haven instantly rose and took her arm.

"Let's stroll in the park," he said abruptly.

Wondering, Gayle joined him, and the two of them went out into the mellow dusk of the spring night. A night patterned from the fragrance of the garden, the low voices of lovers, the wailing of traffic far away on the Avenue.

Gayle tried gallantly to crush the question that was burning into her heart. "It isn't any of my business," she told herself, over and over. "One evening at a time, to be happy, gay."

She smiled up at him flippantly. "You have good taste," she said.

"You are refreshingly conceited."

She flushed. "I meant that other girl," she said. And, oh, how crude it sounded in her own ears. "That Ellen."

Haven stiffened, but remained strangely silent.

"She is very beautiful," she went on, trying to be casual, indifferent, the way men liked their blind dates to be. "Better ask her to dance, hadn't you? I mean, some fiancées don't understand these little flings men take from time to time."

After she had said it, she was a bit afraid, frightened at something she did not understand.

Haven seemed to tower over her. "Gayle Travis, you ought to be spanked. I don't even believe you *are* Gayle Travis—not the sweet little kid

I met. We must have lost you somewhere between Seventh Avenue and Columbus Circle."

Inwardly she was relieved, but she must not take off the brittle armor of indifference. Vera had said so, and Vera certainly knew from experience how to deal with sophisticated men.

"Put it in the Public Notices," she said.

"A good idea. It'll read something like this: 'Will the Story Book who lost a young lady kindly have her paged?'"

Gayle laughed in spite of herself, and something that had once come to them, something fragile and very rare, was reborn.

Haven drew her tenderly down beside him on a bench. Her face was ethereally pale in the silver light, ethereally lovely.

"What would you say, little lady, if I explained to you that the reason I didn't ask my—fiancée to dance was simply because that would mean leaving *you* alone with Morley Dane?"

Morley Dane. For an instant the

He strode to the divan, to peer down at the man Gayle swore she did not know was there

name meant nothing to Gayle. Then she recollected Ellen Janeway's partner, the dissipated young man with the old eyes. Why, Vera had said that she was to have a date with him the following evening.

If only Haven would ask her not to!

Turning to him she asked, "Why on earth shouldn't I be left alone with Morley Dane? I'm going out with him tomorrow night."

Here was his chance to protest. His face grew grim.

"I suppose there isn't a reason. If you choose to spend your evenings with a man who is so notoriously low, so vile that his very presence is a reproach to a decent woman, it's your own affair."

Failure! Defeat! Black as midnight rain.

Back to flippancy, back to pretense, went Gayle. "Your fiancée doesn't seem to share your opinion of him," she said with a light shrug.

"Gayle, little Gayle! Because you do not understnad Life, must you fight it with steel blades? Can't you see the past and the present are separate and apart?"

"And what of the future?"

"The future—" His voice trailed off into silence.

TO Gayle, that silence was evasive. In it she saw a complete picture of Haven's heart: gay and courageous, but true in the end to his own kind—to Ellen.

"Gayle!" he began suddenly. "How can I tell you what's in my heart, when there aren't any words?"

"There are always kisses," she said lightly.

Play your part, Gayle! Disguise the meaning of those kisses; camouflage them with frivolity!

Haven's arms closed about her. Gently he tipped her head back and drank deep of the wine of her love. And in that moment it seemed to Gayle that Heaven was very near.

Suddenly he clasped her by the shoulders and held her at arm's length, peering intently into her face. "Yes," he said whimsically, "I think you'd look very nice in blue."

"Explain that one, mister."

"Fitting you into my dream. For a long, long time, now, I've been planning a little room. It will be in a cottage, I think, and way away from everything. There's a table in it, set for breakfast, with gay-colored dishes, and tulips as a centerpiece. And somewhere in it, in a very important place, there's a woman. She wears a bright blue house dress, and she looks very, very much like you."

Gayle's heart pounded wildly. She added to the picture, Haven in slippers and robe, his dear eyes crinkled up into a whimsical smile. Every morning, for years and years and years. That would be happiness too great for the heart to bear.

"Well," she said, catching her breath sharply, "there are lots of rooms, and lots of tulips, and any day is O. K. for me."

With a low cry, he clasped her in his arms and kissed her, deeply.

Slowly, in the spell of rapture, they made their way back to the others. "We were jus' about to go after you two neckers," Vera announced blatantly. "Gotta go home some time. Place closes up."

"Right," said Haven. "I should be taking Gayle home this minute. She has to get up and go to work in the morning."

Vera's eyes narrowed. "Don't need to bother. The lil girl and I can take

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care of ourselves. Jus' put us into a cab."

Haven started to remonstrate, but Gayle caught the compelling glance in Vera's eyes and interrupted.

"Of course, we can take care of ourselves. Just put us into a cab. We'll be all right."

She said it regretfully. Haven taking her home, looking after her, would be so wonderful. But then Vera was wise in the ways of men, and Vera thought it poor policy to let men friends know they lived together.

Haven held her hand tightly when they said good night. Shielded by the gossamer fabric of the dream that bound them, they were oblivious to the boisterous laughter of the others.

And then, suddenly, the dream was shattered.

"Well," Nick was saying, with a leer, "how much do we owe you two party gals?"

Vera's answer came promptly. "We usually get ten dollars apiece, plus my ten per cent commission and whatever you care to tip us."

Haven and Gayle stood rooted to the spot, one fully as amazed as the other.

Nick grandly peeled two ten-dollar bills from an immense roll, and tossed them carelessly toward Vera, saying, "My treat, Story."

Haven then broke his silence. "I'm afraid I've been stupid," he said, and his voice was cruelly strained, "but I didn't exactly understand this arrangement. I didn't know that your favors were being purchased, at a price, Gayle. I was such an idiot that I even thought you loved me. In my unbelievable ignorance, I thought that your plan for the little room was a promise to marry me, as soon as I had remedied the mistake that was my engagement to Ellen.

"But now I see the thing through your eyes, and regret that I must decline any further—favors. You are very convincing in your rôle. Nick paid you ten dollars, but it was worth twice that. Here."

He thrust another ten-dollar bill into her hands, and before Gayle could open her mouth to protest, the taxi had whisked them away.

"I DON'T see why you have to turn into such a cat all of a sudden." Vera, looking sullen and dissipated and somewhat old, lay sprawled on the couch the following morning, manicuring her nails. "Here I thought I was giving you a break! Why, any number of girls I know would be tickled to death to be on my list and get a chance to earn a few dollars now and then for going out on a party.

"Why, honey, it's a snap! You don't know a break when you see one. With your class, there's no reason why you couldn't knock down a hundred a week, and have a darned good time doing it."

"Sorry, Vera. I can't see it any other way, so there's just no use talking."

"Aw, snap out of it, kid! Yeah, I know you think it would be just great to be a sweet little angel with nice big wings, but men don't fall for that stuff any more. Anyhow, I'm not asking you to do anything bad. All you got to do is make yourself pleasant and good-natured, and keep the visiting buyers happy for an evening. Get it out of your head that I'm trying to make you a bad girl."

Poor, ignorant, coarsened Vera! How could she ever understand the bright rapture that had fled?

Party girl. Good time girl. What would it all mean? Simply that life was a little grosser, a little crueler, a little sadder.

In time nothing would mean much, not even grief such as this. Woman-like, Gayle wanted the wound to remain open. Forgetfulness would be bitter, empty.

"All right," Vera snapped. "Be a sap if you want to! Yes, I'll get out, but it just isn't convenient tonight—or tomorrow night—or the night after that."

The days that followed Gayle endured in silent martyrdom. Vera, untidy and always insolent, was indeed in no hurry to vacate the apartment she had forced herself into.

"Try and put me out," she said. "I've paid my share of a week's rent, and I have a receipt."

Her powder was sifted about everywhere, onto the carpets, into drawers, over the dresser top. She spilled a bottle of scarlet nail polish on Gayle's patchwork quilt, and carelessly left cocktail glasses to make rings on the top of her cherished Duncan Phyfe table.

And worst of all, she filled the place, every evening, with people Gayle loathed.

One night Morley Dane came. Gayle, remembering Haven's contemptuous opinion of him, was filled with repugnance.

"Whatever gave you the idea that you're so high-hat?" Morley had asked, grasping her by the wrists.

Gayle had shaken herself free. "Keep your hands off of me!"

"That's no nice way to treat a guest. But I'm here, and Vera says I can stay, so you might as well put up with me."

At this, Gayle had snatched up her hat and coat and walked out. She had roamed the streets for hours, rather than remain in his company.

And then, after a week that seemed age-long, Vera departed with many a flourish. Gayle devoted herself to putting the little apartment to rights.

While she was restoring its coziness and restful good taste, the idea came to her.

It grew the following day when she happened to be in Carley's store, where were houses dresses on sale, one of them blue. And Fate completed the set-up by bringing her past a florist's shop, where gay tulips were displayed prominently in the window.

After all, Gayle reasoned, the logical thing to do was explain. Once she had explained her innocence in the whole affair, if Haven really loved her, he would believe her.

In high spirits, she called his office. He was out, but she left a cryptic message with his secretary.

"Tell Mr. Story," she said, "that if he calls at Miss Gayle Travis's apartment tomorrow morning at eight, he will discover something of great interest to him."

She did not add that this was Miss Gayle Travis calling.

MORNING came, bringing delicious thrills of excitement. Gayle was up bright and early. She set the table and arranged the tulips into a colorful and most attractive centerpiece, noticing as she did so, how cozy the fireplace looked with the high-backed davenport drawn up before it. When breakfast was over, she and Haven would build a fire and sit there, planning, dreaming.

She slipped into the blue house dress, crisp and fresh with its white ruffled collar, and found it brought a bit of heaven into her eyes.

Blue! Steadfast and sincere, it was. Scarlet for the Doloreses; green for the Kathleens; white for the Dianas;

brown for the Susans—but blue for the Gayles!

Haven would like it.

Singing, she bustled about the little kitchenette, preparing grapefruit in elaborate, sliced patterns, putting bacon on to sizzle.

Then Haven came. "Darling!" he cried, straining her to him. "You'll never know what I've suffered. Guess I've come to my senses. Anyway, I don't care what you used to be; it's the girl you've turned into *now* that I love."

She dimpled mischievously. "I never expected you in the world, Mr. Story," she said. "But now that you're here, it *is* lucky that I have plenty of coffee and a lot of bacon, not to mention the matter of tulips and a blue house dress."

"You angel!"

Gayle wondered why there ever need be heartaches in the world, when solutions were so easy. During breakfast she would simply bask in the sweetness of his love for her; afterward, she would lead him to that high-backed davenport in front of the fireplace and tell him the truth, so that his faith in her would be unshadowed.

"Forgive me, dear, but I'd like to ask you just one thing," he was saying. "Has there been anything between you and Morley Dane, since that night we found our love?"

"Of course not! To me, Morley Dane is a rather poor imitation of nothing. Why do you ask?"

"I don't know. Maybe it's foolishness, and maybe it's just plain jealousy. But I can't help remembering that Vera told me you had an engagement with him for the following evening, and I wondered. That's all."

"You believe me, don't you?"

He did not answer. At that moment there was a lengthy and very definite snore from behind the high back of that davenport. With one stride, Haven was beside it, and peering down into the sleeping face of Morley Dane.

His voice, when he spoke, was dreadfully even and calm. "A man may be fooled once, and even twice," he said, leveling cold eyes, that were once so tender, directly at Gayle. "But he is never fooled the third time. Good-by."

And he was gone.

"Oh, why did you do this to me?" Gayle wailed.

Morley Dane rubbed his eyes stupidly. "What'sh the idea of waking me up in the middle of the night? Can't I have a lil sleep?"

"You broke into my apartment! I can have you arrested for it. Do you hear? *Arrested!*"

"I broke into nobody's apartment. I walked in like a gentleman. Vera said I could; she gave me the key. Good girl, Vera."

GAYLE lived like a robot for a day or two. She ate, worked, ate and slept; then began the cycle all over again. Then she read in the papers an account of the breaking of the engagement between Miss Ellen Janeway and Haven Story.

Why should Haven do this? What prevented him now from seeking his happiness in his own sphere?

The answer she found in a small item in one of the tabloid papers:

> They whisper that the Janeway-Story rift was caused by an anonymous telephone message. Haven can't abide underhanded methods, they say.

What had been a mystery was now clear. Brutally clear. Haven had assumed that the sender of that anony-

mous telephone message, summoning him to surprise Gayle with Morley Dane in her apartment, was Ellen!

Gayle straightway seized her fountain pen and wrote:

> DEAR HAVEN:
> Please don't hate me so much that you refuse to read what I have to say. Ellen didn't telephone that message to your office that day. It was I.

She struggled against the temptation to add the five little words that would explain Morley's presence in her apartment. Swiftly, before Heart had a chance to conquer over Pride, she added the final sentence:

> Even though I do not know her, I cannot remain silent and let this Ellen of yours suffer for something she did not do.

Very late that night, Haven came. Haggard he was, and very, very weary. "I've fought against it, Gayle," he said, "but I guess, after all, a man can be fooled twice and still come back for more. Ellen broke the engagement herself; she's found a rich man. But anyone who can be as sporting as you were, writing that letter to me, is worth while. I don't care if you are a party girl."

"I'm not. I meant to explain to you all along that Vera got me into that mess. I was quite ignorant about it. *Dumb* is a better word, I suppose."

"But Morley Dane—"

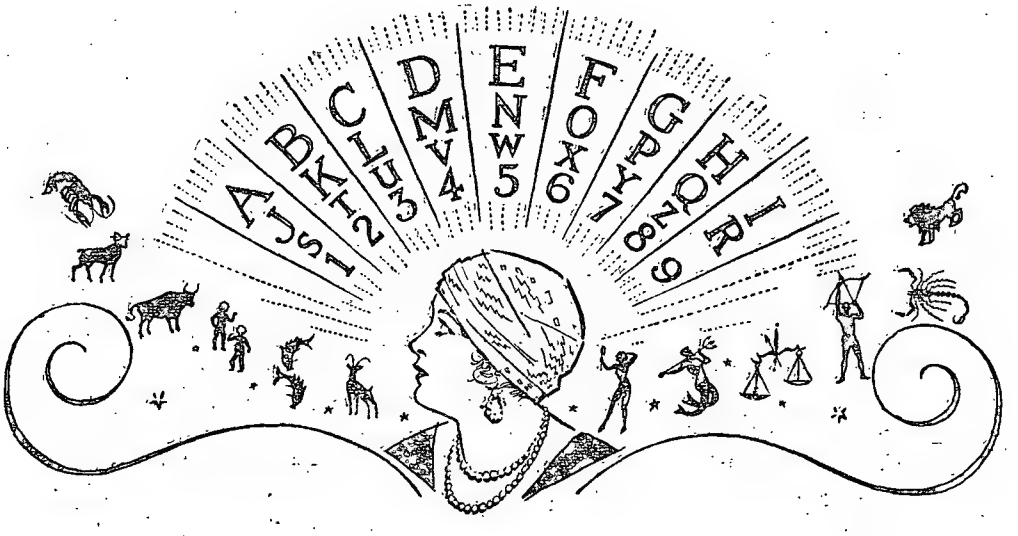
"For a week Vera lived with me. During that time she gave him the key to the apartment. I swear I didn't know he was there until he snored."

Haven looked down at her with adoring eyes. "Angel!" he murmured. "I'll never doubt you again. There'll be no room for doubt, only for love, in our Paradise for two."

On a Quiet Afternoon

MY thoughts go creeping through
The clear blue of this mountain afternoon
Across the distance, dear, to you.
I wonder where you are
And shall I see you soon.
It seems so very long, so very far.
I wonder what you do
And are you wishing you were here
Perhaps, or I were there?
Are you really thinking of me, dear,
And do you truly care
The way you want me to, the way you know I do?
Even the wind hums never a tune.
It's such a quiet afternoon.
I wish I knew.

—Grace Meredith



What's in a Name?

By ADRIENNE PEABODY

YOUR fate lies in your name. Every letter of the name by which the world knows you is represented by a number, and the numbers tell the true story of your character and your destiny.

Know yourself, find you can meet the world with poise and courage.

Mrs. Peabody, a numerologist of world-wide fame, is eager to help you to a life of greater happiness through increased self-knowledge. Through a study of your name and birth date, she can tell you what you are really like, and what is, for YOU, the best way out of your present problems.

Just send to Adrienne Peabody, All-Story, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y., your full name, as it was given you at birth AND as you sign it now, together with your complete birth date (month, day and year).

BE SURE TO ENCLOSE A STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE. (Canadians, send U. S. stamps, or coins.)

In return, Mrs. Peabody will send you a name and birth date analysis.

"THERE'S a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." Shakespeare also said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

All life runs in cycles. The numbers in your birth date, through the three life cycles of the month, day and year, show the different parts each one of us plays in life and, what is more important, just how to play them.

Sometimes the early life is an unhappy one, but the numbers will reveal a rewarding time later on, in the middle life. And often when numbers reveal the middle part of life, between the ages of 25 and 50, as hard working and full of responsibility, the last cycle will be shown to give a respite of peace and contentment. So does the law of compensation work, if we only give it a chance.

Your birth date shows what vocation you are best fitted for or, if you are one of those so-called fortunate people who do not have to work, what hobby or interest you can best take up as an avocation.

You have no idea how many restless people write me, wanting to know what to do with their leisure time, saying that they have no talents whatsoever. Of course all they need is directing and encouragement because there is no such person in existence as a person who cannot do something well.

It is true that many people have not found themselves yet. But Numerology is one of those channels through which you can find your rôle in life.

It is not a hit-or-miss world. It is an orderly world, and there is a place for you and you, in the sun.

One of the most tragic things in the world, however, is the way some people are miscast for the rôles or parts they have to play in life. The child, for instance, of parents who insist he must study law, because the family have all been lawyers, when, as a matter of fact the child wants to be an artist or an actor.

And I've known cases which were the other way around. One man insisted that his daughter should become a musician, bought her a fine piano, and made her study music, when what she wanted was to study law. The horrified father finally had to give in, and this girl is now an honored member of the bar.

Why be a square peg in a round hole? Be successful at the thing you are best fitted for. Numerology, through the analysis of your name, every letter of which has a symbolic meaning, and the interpretation of your birth date, points the way to success.

Of course, you may have to compromise somewhat between desire and what life offers you in opportunity, but that does not mean you cannot be happy and wise. If you happen to be one of those unfortunates who have just lost a job, above all else, do not have fear. We attract toward us what we vibrate; no more, no less. How can you attract a job if you block all the channels through fear?

Recently, a man came to see me, who was fired for the first time in his life from a good job. As he himself put it, "I've walked out of jobs more than once, but never dreamed I could be fired from one." Well, he had no money saved—the usual story of bad investments—and, to complicate the story further, he was helping a family entirely without support, except for his help.

This man was panic stricken, but when I assured him another job would be his within a fortnight, he bucked up a little. The time is up, and he has got a job, but if he hadn't changed his mental attitude to one of assurance and courage, I am sure that he would never have been hired.

The time may be ripe, opportunity may be knocking at your door, but after all you must do your part, too.

Here is a letter received the other day from an older woman.

DEAR ADRIENNE PEABODY: I was left a widow, several years ago, with just a few thousand dollars, which is rapidly disappearing. I have never been educated for any business life, but I have been for many years a good housekeeper. Last June I bought a little restaurant downtown—really just a sandwich shop—and although I have done all the buying and most of the cooking myself, I cannot seem to make it pay.

Now, dear Mrs. Peabody, I have not made money at all, but have just broken even, and I feel discouraged, because I work so hard. Shall I keep on with this venture, or try to get a job at something? My birth

date is April 20, 1890. I shall be so grateful for any help you can give me.

Yours for encouragement,

BETTY B.

MY DEAR BETTY B.: By all means keep on with what you are doing. After all you haven't been in business six months yet, which is a very short time to make a success of something brand new to you.

Think of all the training you are getting, so much more practical than if you were taking a course in restaurant work. Your numbers show further that you are on the right track. Anything to do with catering, or cooking, or tea room management would be excellent for you. You will be able to hire someone to do the detail work for you a little later on, and, even if you should want to take a job at a later period in your life you will have demonstrated your fitness for a good one, by sticking at what you are doing until you make a success of it.

Besides, I am going to whisper something in your ear, Betty: You are apt to marry again and have a home of your own and a husband to cook for, a little later on.

Yours for success,

ADRIENNE PEABODY.

Wherever you are, whatever your problem, Numerology will help you to a better understanding of life.

To Morpheus

TOUCH the pillow of my love
Lightly with a gentle hand;
Let his well-earned slumber be
Sweet and deep—sweet and deep.
Sprinkle moon dust on my love;
Make his dreams a starry band;
And, I pray you, let him see
My own face within his sleep.

—*Frances Miller*

A STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE MUST ACCOMPANY THIS COUPON

(Canadian readers, please send U.S. stamps, or coin.)

ADRIENNE PEABODY,
ALL-STORY,
280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

This coupon is not good after January 26, 1935.

Kindly print or type the following information

Please send me your analysis of my character and destiny as learned from a study of my name and birth date.

Name (as it was given you at birth).....

Name (as you sign it now).....

Address.....

Birth Date (month, day and year).....

Your Pen Personality

By HELEN KING

THIS is Gentleman's Day in this department. The male readers of ALL-STORY are complaining, and they are quite indignant about it, too.

They say that they are not appreciated. They feel that the girls treat them unfairly. They object to being treated casually. They bitterly cry out that most girls are gold diggers. And they want something done about it!

The letter containing this tear-jerking plea was signed by eleven young men, who claim that they represent a club of one hundred boys and youths. They further state that they represent the men of America.

All of which is a pretty big order. Never before has one lone female been called upon to assist all the men in the country. However, here goes.

To Ted, Joe, Gus, Leo, Herb, Art, Jim, Fred, Lowell, Lee and Bill—not to mention all the other lads in the country—I think you are all wet!

I firmly recommend a strong dose of psychology if you can honestly believe all the statements you made in your letter.

In the first place, you should not judge by appearances. The fact that a girl may "kid" and tease you does not mean that she is only fooling. It may be her method of showing that she thinks you're great, but is afraid that if you knew it your head might swell.

Secondly, you *are* appreciated. Don't let that worry you! It's the girl who should tremble most. If you feel that you are doing more than your share, and that the girl is taking you for granted, then it is time you are well rid of her.

But, make sure that you are doing more than giving the girl your company. After all, it is no fun for a girl to give up her time, spend her extra money on clothes, lessen her chances of having good times with a crowd—just to have you sit in her living room and praise yourself. Treat her as you would want another fellow to treat your sister.

Thirdly, you're not being treated casually when you find the lady of your dreams giving up desserts to make herself more attractive in your eyes. You're not treated lightly when she saves her pennies to get you a fine birthday gift. You're not considered just a mere male when she waits patiently for your long-promised-but-forgotten phone call.

Despite rumors to the contrary, the world still belongs to the man. The woman is still sought after. And men still do the proposing—although sometimes they aren't aware of it until later.

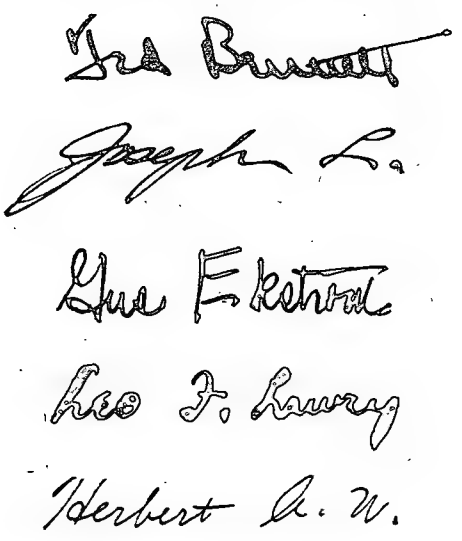
Almost every girl likes to have mas-

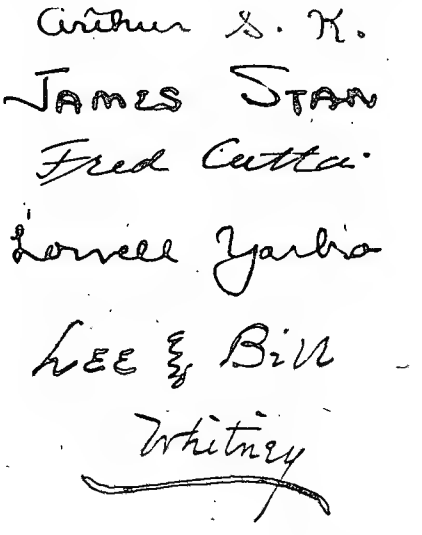
culine attention. Almost every girl wants to appear popular. Almost every girl would go halfway to obtain congenial masculine companionship. It's harder for the girl than the boy, for she must catch her man without exposing the bait, and her "honorable" intentions.

So, gentlemen, I suggest that you get wise to yourselves. I urge you to remember that there are plenty of very nice girls who will accept you if you can prove that you are equally nice. I suggest that you learn the art of gentle conversation.

And remember, the successful and popular man is the one who does not discuss himself nor his own interest, but who keeps the girl so wrapped up in her own self that she doesn't have time to notice his shortcomings.

I'm sorry I can't condole with you, lads, but maybe the girls of the country will have something to say in a later issue. Get ready for the onslaught, boys!





THIS COUPON AND A STAMPED SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE MUST ACCOMPANY REQUEST FOR ANALYSIS

(Canadian readers, please send U. S. stamps, or coin.)

MISS HELEN KING,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

This coupon is not good after January 26, 1935. A stamped self-addressed envelope must be inclosed when forwarding.

I inclose handwriting specimen for advice and analysis.

Name..... Age.....

Address.....

.....

The Lonesome Club

Conducted by DOROTHEA DALE

MAKE FRIENDS! JOIN THE LONESOME CLUB!

Write to Mrs. Dale, care of the All-Story, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.
Describe your personality, your ambitions, your occupation, your surroundings.
Make your letters so interesting that others will want to know you.
Sign your full name and address for our files.
Choose a nickname under which your letter may appear in these pages.
When you write to pals whose letters have already been published:
Enclose your letter in an unaddressed, stamped envelope.
Send it with a note to Mrs. Dale, saying for whom it is intended.

Rules: Girls must write to girls. Boys must write to boys.
You must send postage to forward your letters. (Canadians, send U. S. stamps, or coin)
Do not ask Mrs. Dale for anyone's address.
But sign your own letter to the pal in full!

Dear Mrs. Dale:

I live on a tobacco plantation and will be glad to tell all about how tobacco is raised. Am a married woman of 23, have three husky boys. Also live near a beautiful lake. Swimming is my favorite sport. My ambition is to become a dress designer. Come on, pen pals, write me a line and let me tell you all about tobacco.

Tobacco Farmerette.

Am a girl of 25, plump, considered attractive. Am a home girl; love to cook, sew. Live in Danbury, the leading hat center. I resemble Kate Smith, so just call me

Kate.

I'm looking for a pal that's a straight-shooter, a real pal! I'm a chap of 18, have blue eyes and wavy brown hair. Write, boys, and find out why I call myself

Daredevil of Ohio.

Have you any "Lonesomites" who want to write to Australia? Perhaps it's because I'm woozy after an attack of the flu, that I've plucked up courage to see if I'll be lucky enough to get a pen friend. The more the merrier! Am a young lady of 28, married. Do not dance, but don't let that stop you. Have a good sense of humor, and fond of reading, like walking and gardening. Will tell you anything you want to know about Australia, Victoria in particular. Am an ex-teacher and stenographer. Why not write and find out more about me? Here's hoping!

Getsoblue.

(5¢ postage.)

Lonesome widow who loves a home. Have a pleasant disposition and would like to correspond with pals of my own age. Am 37. Please write, for I'm really quite lonesome.

Kansas Widow.

I am serving an enlistment here in Panama for a period of two years. Will be very grateful for some pen pals. Am a young man of 21, with blue eyes, fair complexion, and blond hair. Will be glad to hear from all pals representing all parts of the world.

The Wooden Soldier.

Should like very much to receive letters from all over the world. Am a girl of 18, have brown hair and blue eyes. Can write a little French. Enjoy sports, music and movies. Will answer all letters and be a

true pen pal. Come on, everybody, write to me; don't keep me waiting.

Helen in Reading.

I have dark brown hair and eyes, and am a girl of 17. Like sports, music, books and anything exciting. Would like to receive letters from all, both young and old, from all over the world. I promise to answer all letters. **Oklahoma Brownie.**

I'm a miss of 39 and want lots of pals. Every letter will be answered at once, so won't you sit down right away and drop me a line?

Just Mary on Pine Island.

A miss of 16, have black, wavy hair, brown eyes, and love to write letters. Want to become an author. Also enjoy sports and dancing. Will tell you plenty more if you'll just send letters to **Babe of Virginia.**

Would like to hear from oodles of pen pals. Am a young man of 21, have blue eyes and blond hair. Am one of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Love all sports, but my favorite is football. Will answer all letters and exchange snaps. **Sergeant Bill.**

Would like to have some pen pals. Am a girl of 16 with reddish-brown hair, green eyes. Favorite sports are dancing and skating. Would like to correspond with someone of my own age from the West or anywhere. Let's get acquainted. Will gladly exchange snapshots.

Ginger in South Euclid.

Would like to hear from some pen pals. Am a boy of 19, in the C. C. C. camp. Am six feet tall, weigh 171 pounds, have brown hair and blue eyes. Love swimming, dancing, tennis, golf and many other sports. Will answer all letters and exchange snaps. **Happy Cook.**

Mm-Mm-Mm—I'm hummin'
'Cause my daily work is through,
And I know that night is comin'
And night will find me writin' to you.

I'm whistlin', lookin' at a lovely moon,
'Cause I'm hopin' to hear from you soon.

Please answer my call;
I'm brunette, attractive and not too tall.
I like sports, dancing, and basketball.
I'll write in summer, winter, or fall.

All Alone Miss.

Have dark brown hair and gray eyes. Would like some pen pals because I'm quite lonesome. Am a young man. Please write. **Ted of Mass.**

Young man, not quite thirty, and live a very lonesome life. Would like to find some sincere pals. Am interested in almost everything. Like outdoor sports and am especially keen on boating, swimming and fishing. For the past six months have been compelled to live in a small town where I have no friends, and I find it exceedingly dull. Have traveled a bit, and am sure I could make my letters interesting. Would deeply appreciate hearing from fellows anywhere, regardless of age. Will exchange snaps, too. **Earl of Freeport.**

Jo'ly girl of 16, have curly hair, brown eyes, and a nice disposition. Fond of all sports, especially dancing, swimming, and baseball. Would like to hear from pen pals all over the world. Will write interesting letters to all who write. Will also exchange snapshots.

Smiling Dot.

Am making a plea for a little corner in your club. Am a young man of 26, very lonesome and anxious for true pals. Have been on the stage four years and am now a traveling salesman, at least until I can get back in the show business. Love theater, art, and swimming. Be a sport and help fill my mailbox.

Andre from N. B.

Am looking for pen pals from anywhere. Am a young lady of 19, with blue eyes and light brown hair. My hobby is swimming, but love all other sports too. Am a graduate of high school and am studying to be a nurse. **Vini.**

I would like to join The Lonesome Club. Is there anyone who would like to write to a very lonely twin girl? Am 20, and as my mother is dead I wish some of you girls would write to me. Like all sports. I go nearly everywhere with my brother Jim, and will be glad to send snaps of both of us. To those who will write I will send a little gift. Come on, girls, I'll answer all your letters and tell you all about myself and my twin brother. Be a true pal!

True Pal Lorraine.

Have a heart and let me be one of your pals. I'm never lonesome, but would like pals just the same. Am a girl of 14, have light brown, wavy hair and dark brown eyes with long eyelashes. Fond of all sports and a lover of animals. Love dancing and music. Can do eight steps of the Charleston and would love to learn tap dancing. My greatest ambition is to become a movie star. Am anxious to hear from pals all over the world, especially Hollywood or Hawaii. Will exchange snaps.

Betty Boop of Canada.

I'm a young fellow of twenty-two
Who wants pals that are honest and true.
I'm five feet nine, and dress rather neat;
Have lots of time to rest my feet.
Like to write songs, the type you like best;
The blues and the waltzes and all the rest.
So get out your pens and ink and write,
And I'll be glad to do right with all my might.
Now I must leave with a hi—de—hi,
'Cause I'll be 'spectin' a long reply.

Lyricist.

Girl of 17, have blond wavy hair, blue eyes and a good many freckles. Am a tap dancer and live in a mining town. Would like to hear from girls around my own age who are interested in dancing. Promise to answer all letters. **Freckles of the Mines.**

Am 25, and anxious to have many friends. My hobbies are good music, piano playing, sewing, cooking, reading, hiking, embroidery, and quilt making. Would like many pals between the ages of 20 and 35 and promise to write interesting letters to all who are willing to write me. May I hear from some pals in foreign countries? **Mrs. Rob, California.**

Have you room for a girl of 29, with dark brown eyes and brown hair? I enjoy all sports and like to read and dance. Come on, all you pen pals from everywhere, and write to me.

Letty.

Unknown friends: Somewhere in this world I know there are plenty of girls just as lonely as I, so am sending out my plea to them. Am a girl of 25, have dark brown hair and blue eyes. Love all sports, good times and plenty of fun. Am a stenographer by profession and am employed by the government in a Farm Credit Bureau, so you can see that my life is not very exciting. Therefore, I am looking forward to receiving a lot of letters, and will answer all and exchange snapshots. Come on, girls, write me, and you won't be sorry. **Ohio Billie.**

Whoopee! Here I am, a little blue-eyed blonde who hails from the West. Am just dying to exchange snaps and write to any pals who will be good enough to write to me. Am a lover of nature in every form, so it won't be hard to interest me. **Curly Saskatchewan.**

Am lonely at times and would welcome loads of pals from wherever they might come. **Fill**

up the mailbox. Every letter will be answered. Am a girl of 27, have brown hair and eyes. Fond of reading, writing, and music and dancing. For further information write to

Brown-Eyed Sue.

May I join your ranks? Am a miss of sweet 16, have light brown, curly hair, large blue eyes, and a peaches-and-cream complexion, with a few freckles on my pug nose. Am five feet six inches tall and rather slim. Have a hobby, love sports, and am a good sport. Come on, pals, drop me a line. Will answer all letters and would like to exchange snapshots. I'll be waiting for letters.

Idaho Curly.

Am a little girl of 17 Novembers, with very dark brown hair and gray eyes. Have Hungarian parents, though most people tell me I look Irish. Any of my snapshots will convince you that my smile is quite attractive. Am a secretary, salesgirl, and what have you, in a hand-embroidery and art shoppe. Go to shows occasionally, like to read thrilling stories, and have quite a collection of various kinds of dress pins. Am an excellent toe dancer, on the other person's toes. Will be anxiously waiting for pen pals.

Lexington Avenue Rose.

Won't you write to a girl of 18 who is full of fun? Love reading, dancing, all sports, and writing. Am so full of mischief that I'm always in trouble, but it's not really bad trouble, for I always come out set for another tumble. Promise to write interesting letters. Willing to exchange snapshots.

Call Me Louise.

This is my first attempt at this sort of thing, so please everyone write to me. Want to hear from everyone between the ages of 19 and 22. Am interested in sports of all kinds. Will answer all letters.

Just Andy.

Girl of 30, have reddish-brown curly hair, hazel eyes. My hobbies are golfing, swimming, and dancing. Also do a lot of reading and am a radio fan. Would appreciate hearing from everyone, everywhere!

Lu Lu.

Widow of 32, with brown eyes, brown wavy hair. Like shows and dancing. Won't someone please write to me?

Snooks of Minnesota.

Young man of 24, with dark brown curly hair and brown eyes. Am of Irish and German descent. Am very sensitive and bashful and haven't many friends. Please write to

Bashful Tom.

Am very lonely, so won't you other lonely pals try throwing some ink my way? Am a fun-loving girl of 22, with auburn hair and brown eyes. Have a jolly disposition. Will answer all who are interested.

Hoosier Mary.

Girl of not quite 15 with blue eyes and blond hair. Favorite sport is baseball. Like ice skating and go to movies often. Collect baseball heroes' pictures and movie stars' pictures. Would love to have you all as pen pals, so please write. Will answer all letters from girls of any ages.

Gig of Illinois.

Hoy, mateys! Just a lonely girl in her early teens who wants tons upon tons of true pen pals from every crevice of this big world. Have brown hair, blue eyes, am full of pep and not bad to look at. The Goofus of all Goofuses, and as funny as a king's jester. I play the Hawaiian guitar and am somewhat of a blunderbuss. Want pals everywhere, from the U. S., Canada, British Isles, Europe, Africa, Hawaii, China, and Japan. Promise to answer all letters. Age does not matter, girls, so please write to

Mimi, the Blunderbuss.

Here is another call to you to please help me secure true pen pals. Am a youth nearing my late teens, love all sports and anything that's exciting. Come on, boys, get pen and paper and give me a short note. Please write to

Eagle Feather.

Hi, pals! Have a heart and write to a lonely girl of 15, who loves to swim and dance. Have brown curly hair and brown eyes. Love to write and receive long letters. Have traveled quite a lot, and my ambition is to be a radio singer. Will more than gladly answer all who write. How about it? Come on, girls from everywhere, and answer my plea.

Peppy Peggy.

By being very careful I have managed to attain the age of 23 and with nary a broken bone. Am rather short and dumpy, my hair is black and almost straight, my eyes are brown, and am minus a strong jutting chin. Have no personality whatever and am not good-looking, but at least I admit it. Will try to make letters interesting and entertaining. Am studying and working to become a tailor. Radio is my hobby. Dance a little. Always smoke a pipe, which I enjoy very much.

Jim of Joplin.

Won't you be a pen friend for a lonesome girl living in New Zealand? Enjoy reading and read a great deal, but often I feel lonely and therefore should like true pen pals, especially from America. Do you really think you'd like me for a pen pal? Why not give me a chance? Am a girl of 18, like dancing and movies. Have brown wavy hair and blue eyes.

Kewpie. (5c postage.)

Am a young, dark-haired, blue-eyed girl of 19 and considered beautiful. Being an Aussie, I would love to gain pen friends of my own sex all over the English-speaking world. Can speak French a little. Love all sports, outdoor and indoor. Am considered an excellent horseback rider. Am a great dreamer, and adore music, which seems to take me right apart from the realities of life. Please, all you girls of my own age, write to me. Please enclose a photo, which I will place in my Book of Memories.

Leonie of Aussie. (5c postage.)

Am a girl of 13, have brown hair and brown eyes. Love to read and sew. Would like pals from everywhere, especially California and Texas, but all will be welcome. Will answer all letters and exchange snapshots. Everyone write.

Detroiter June.

I can't seem to get enough pen pals, so here I'm pleading again. Am a lively gal of 22, have blue eyes, chestnut hair. Am in for all fun and sports; love to dance, swim, or do most anything. Is there anyone who'd care to be my friend? I'm challenging you to sling some ink this way, so come on, everybody! I'll send a snap and a little gift to all who write.

Hot Pepper of Pa.

Girl of 18 wants pen pals from far and near. Have brown, curly hair and brown eyes. Am a singer. Like movies. Will answer all letters.

Mary of Pennsylvania.

Young married woman of 24. Am home all day keeping house for hubby and a three-year-old daughter. One time mark is the mailman, and what fun to talk it over in letters with others who do the same things as I. Love to sew, crochet, cook, and attend movies. Who wants a good pattern or idea?

Pat of Rochester.

Am a young man of 26, full of pep. Have blue eyes, fair hair, and am tall and slim. Dancing is my favorite sport. Don't like golf. Am a seventh son. Take pleasure in reading others' thoughts. Please write.

Luckiest Lucky.

I'd like to hear from boys all over the States. Am fond of all sports and would like to hear from other sports. Am a boy of 18; senior in high school. Come on, sling some ink.

Cider.

Boy of 17, wants loads of pen pals. Come on, fellers, get busy! Am interested in all sports especially basketball. Am a senior in high school. Have blond hair and blue eyes. Will

exchange snaps. How about a letter from some of you pals? **Dynamite of Maine.**

Am a lively girl of 13 and a Jewess. Am hoping to hear from girls between 13 and 15 the world over. Have dark brown hair and eyes. Want to be a reporter. Love to read mystery books and go to movies. People say I have a fine sense of humor. Please, pen pals, try me out. **Jumping Jack.**

Would like to join your army if I may. Have blue eyes, golden-brown hair, and am considered attractive. Am 16, would like to trade stamps or souvenirs and snapshots with all pals of my own age. Will give snaps to first five who write me. **Ontario Soldier.**

Am a young girl of 15, have hazel eyes, auburn hair. Love to read, go horseback riding, and dance. Would love to exchange photographs and would like to hear from pen pals everywhere. **Blue Bonnet Kid.**

A young married girl of 22 is begging for pen pals. Am a lively auburn-haired Irish gal, with blue eyes and lots of pep. Like all sports, and am especially interested in dancing, singing, and the guitar. Am studying interior decorating, and like to dabble with art. Have traveled a lot and even herded cattle. Please, everyone, young and old, write to **Irish Evie.**

May I crash the gates of The Lonesome Club and ask for a few pen pals? My description is—fair hair, blue eyes, and 22. Will answer all letters and exchange snaps with everybody who writes. Come on, America, and write to this little girl in England.
Miss Betty. (5c postage.)

Young man of 28, intensely interested in stamps and stamp collecting. Am desirous of having a correspondent in Newfoundland with whom I can exchange stamps and ideas. Also would like pals from Canada and British Colonies. I work in one of the local offices and have access to all used stamps arriving on parcels and letters. Will be pleased to answer all letters. **Phil-Atelic.**

We are two seniors in high school, eighteen years of age. We want more friends, in spite of the fact that we have many now. We have quite a few hobbies, among which are writing, sports, and dancing. We will make our letters interesting and will relate our stage experiences. Also are willing to exchange snapshots. **The Gold Dust Twins.**

Hello, everybody here! I'm a blue-eyed blonde of 14, and wish someone would write to me. My hobbies are dancing, singing, and baseball. Would like to hear from you all, but especially someone from Scotland. Come one, come all, and write to **Blond Edna.**

I'm a young man of 20, have light brown, wavy hair and a light complexion. I'm an artist, do fashion drawings. Would like to correspond with those who are interested along this line. Also those interested in poetry, the theater, and good books. So, pen pals, dip your pens deep and write to me. You can expect a lengthy, interesting letter in return.
Washington State Jack.

French girl of 14. Love all sports, especially horseback riding and swimming. Would love to hear from pen pals everywhere, but especially from those living in England, Germany, Spain, Canada and Texas. I promise to answer all letters and exchange snapshots. Have reddish-brown, wavy hair, blue eyes, and a medium complexion. Am a sophomore in high school. Come on now, don't fail me!
French Rene.

Won't you give me a wee bit of space in The Lonesome Club? Am a hazel-eyed miss with brown, wavy hair. Love most all outdoor sports. Have the air fever very bad. My ambition is to become an aviatrix. Would like to hear from pals everywhere, but mainly from the West. Am a girl of 14, a clerk in a drugstore. Will answer all letters and exchange snapshots.
Pharmacy Rose.

Young married woman of 24, have blond hair and blue eyes. Left the States seven years ago and have lived since then in Switzerland. Have visited London, Paris and Berlin and am now living in Italy. Am lonesome sometimes. Have a sunny disposition and like doing almost everything. Am looking for some sincere pals from all over the world, especially Chicago and Los Angeles, about my age or older. Will answer immediately and am willing to exchange snapshots. **Ruth of Italy.** (5c postage.)

I'm a lonesome girl of 13, have brown hair and hazel eyes. Love swimming, singing, dancing and all sports. Am especially fond of reading, so ahoy there, fellow pen pals, write to
Syracuse Sylvia.

I would love to correspond with pen pals from all over the world. Am a girl not quite 18, have auburn hair and brown eyes. Do not go many places, as I am working in an ice cream parlor and haven't much free time. Will everyone please write to me? **Onie of Maryland.**

Am a girl of 13, have light brown hair, green eyes and a fair complexion. Love to read and sew, and especially interested in movie stars. Would like to hear from girls everywhere. Will answer all letters and exchange snapshots.
Michiganer.

Am a married woman of 22, live in the Panhandle of Texas. Love to write and will tell you all about the wide open spaces. Have brown hair and blue eyes. Like all sports and music. Will send snapshots. Please write, everyone.
Allie of Texas.

Just a small, slim widow with blue eyes and brown, bobbed hair. Am over 35, but look younger. Love to cook and also enjoy a good book before a cheery log fire. Won't someone write to me? **Long Island Widow.**

Help! Please rescue me from loneliness. Ah! to be sure, I shall answer all letters promptly. Am a girl of 19, have black eyes, dark brown, wavy hair and a few freckles on my face. But alas, alack! I am only 4 feet 9 inches tall. Love to read, dance, sew, cook, and write letters. Will send snapshots to everyone if they can stand the shock. **Tiny of Indiana.**

Just a lonesome cowgirl of 16, with coal-black, curly hair, laughing brown eyes and long lashes. Have a turned-up nose, too. Love every sport I know. Am lonesome because of the loss of a pal. Come on, everyone, write to me.
Tuffy, New Mexico.

Am a blond girl of 19, and heaps of fun. Love all sports, especially baseball and hockey; and would rather dance and sing than eat. Any pals in the U. S. please write, but all others are welcome too. Live in a small town near Toronto, and as I cannot afford to travel I'll just have to hear about new places. Get busy, you lassies! **Just Plain Bill.**

A dashing, blue-eyed, curly-headed blonde, standing just 5 feet 2 inches. Would love oodles of college pen pals and everyone else too. Hail from the snow-covered State of Minnesota. Am 17 and bubbling with happiness and fun, but would like to make new friends. Adore dancing, horseback riding, ice skating, driving, and tennis.

Am ca—razy about football, and never miss a U. of M. game. Let me tell you about all the excitement and thrills. Would be delighted to hear from someone going to the University of California or other colleges. My favorite course is chemistry, believe it or not. Please, everyone, tall, short, homely or good-looking, fat or slim, don't be bashful about writing.

Will send a photo to the first eight. Is it a bargain? Aw, c'mon!

Minnesota Football Fan.

Am a young man of 24, a salesman. Would like to correspond with all "Colonials" interested in stamp collecting. Have many duplicates to exchange. Will answer all letters promptly. Philatelist in New York.

Am a girl of 15, 5 feet 6, have brown hair and eyes. Love to cook, listen to the radio, and read. Am in grade 12 in high school. Want girl pals from 15 to 22. Jo of Jersey.

Girl of 17, have blue eyes and brown, wavy hair. Like everything from reading to horseback riding. Am hoping to hear from everyone. Oklahoma Tiny.

Would enjoy receiving letters from lonesome folks. Love dancing, hiking and movies, but most of all I enjoy new friends. Am a brunette with gray eyes. Am a farm girl of 20. Everyone write, regardless of what country you hail from. Iowa Friend.

Since my buddy and I parted I have loads of time on my hands, and I would like some pen pals. Am a young man of 23, have dark brown, wavy hair, blue eyes and a fair complexion. Am 6 feet tall. Interested in the theater, and my one ambition is to go to New York to live. Please write. Ray Donald in Pa.

Come on, pals, sling some ink my way. I promise to answer all letters. Would especially like pals of 15 and 18 who like literature and outdoor sports and who have traveled some. Promise a picture to the first five who write. Don't disappoint me. Minnesota Carrots.

Am a girl of 15, a sophomore in high school. Love to read. Like to swim and ride horseback. Am also very fond of directing plays and acting. Have blond, curly hair, brown eyes. Considered a good sport by all. Like to attend movies and Buster Crabbe is my ideal man. Like dogs and planes. Come on, girls, write to me. Dean.

Got room for me? Am just another lonesome girl who loves to receive and answer letters. Won't someone write to me? Am a girl of 20, strawberry blonde, with blue eyes. Like to hear about anything. Will answer all letters faithfully. Floss of Jersey.

We're three fun-loving girls, aged 15, who would like to correspond with other girls between 14 and 16. We would like to hear from girls in all parts of the country, but preferably the West. Two of us are brunettes, the other a blonde. Two are sophomores and the other a junior in high school. Our hobbies are bicycle riding and baseball. Please answer our plea.

We Three.

Am interested in things that are happening in the world and would be very pleased to hear something about foreign countries. In return I will tell about things happening here in Texas. Am a young miss. June in Texas.

Here's a girl of 17, with blond hair, wanting some pen pals very badly. Won't just dozens and dozens of you girls give me a break? I'm not exactly lonesome, but I love to write letters. Work as a stenographer in an insurance office. Like dancing, movies, reading, and am crazy about all sports. Oh, yes, I have blue eyes, and am neither too fat nor too slim. Come on, girls, drop me a line. Promise to answer all letters and exchange snapshots.

Blondie of Michigan.

Am a girl of 15, have black hair, brown eyes and am 5 feet 3 inches tall. Am fond of music, reading and writing letters. Would especially want to hear from girls of Louisiana, but all are welcome. Promise to answer all letters.

Miss Honolulu.

I'm lonesome, but I ought not to be. I'm out for honest-to-goodness pen pals. Can you help me? I want to join your Club, it is so interesting. I'm about 24 years of age. Would like you older pals to please to write. Have dark brown, wavy hair and dark eyes. I'm a housekeeper. Live in a lovely country town. Can make my letters interesting. Come on now, girls, I want some real pals. Pal Hunter.

Just settin' and awaitin' for some pen pals who would be interested in theatrical work. It is my profession and has been all my life. Am a man of 36, 6 feet tall. Have been all over the States in different lines of theatrical work. Will write some interesting things about my travels. Am willing to exchange photos if interested. Let me hear from all of you.

Young Theatrical.

Am a miss of 17 with dark brown, wavy hair, grayish eyes. Am very fond of dancing. Would like pen pals from the East and Middle West. Am a senior in high school and have many friends. Love to receive and write letters. Get ambitious, pals, and write to me!

Miss Evergreen.

Am a bride of three months, and 21 years of age. Am very slender, have blue eyes and brown hair. Love to play piano, read, go to shows, dance, and write short stories. Also love to write letters. Am exceptionally happy, but have a lot of spare time, so would like to receive letters from girls throughout the world.

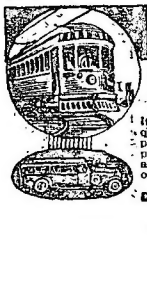
Dot of San Francisco.

Am a young girl lonesome for pen pals. Have just turned 17; have brown hair and blue eyes. Love all outdoor sports, especially swimming, basketball, dancing and hiking. I'll be a very true pal to all who care to write. Snaps for the first ten. Judy of B. C.

Married woman of 25, and look like a schoolgirl of 18 instead of a married woman. Have two lovely children. Have been married for eight years. Have grayish blue eyes and am considered good-looking. My hobby is to sing all popular and blues songs that can make me waste a tear. Dancing is my pleasure. Love a good time and enjoy being a housewife. Have lots of room in my mailbox, and I'd love to hear from some married ladies who also would like to share my spare moments.

Blues Song Annette.

Live on a small place in the country. Am 28 and married. I am alone much of the day. Please, girls, write to me, no matter what your age, and I promise to answer all. Will send a pretty folder of Auburn, N. Y., to the first five who write. Don't disappoint me. Floss.



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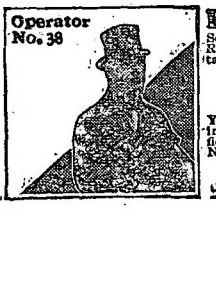

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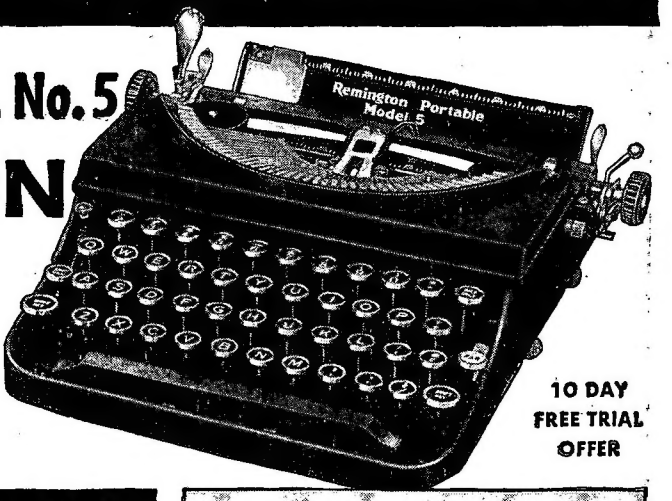

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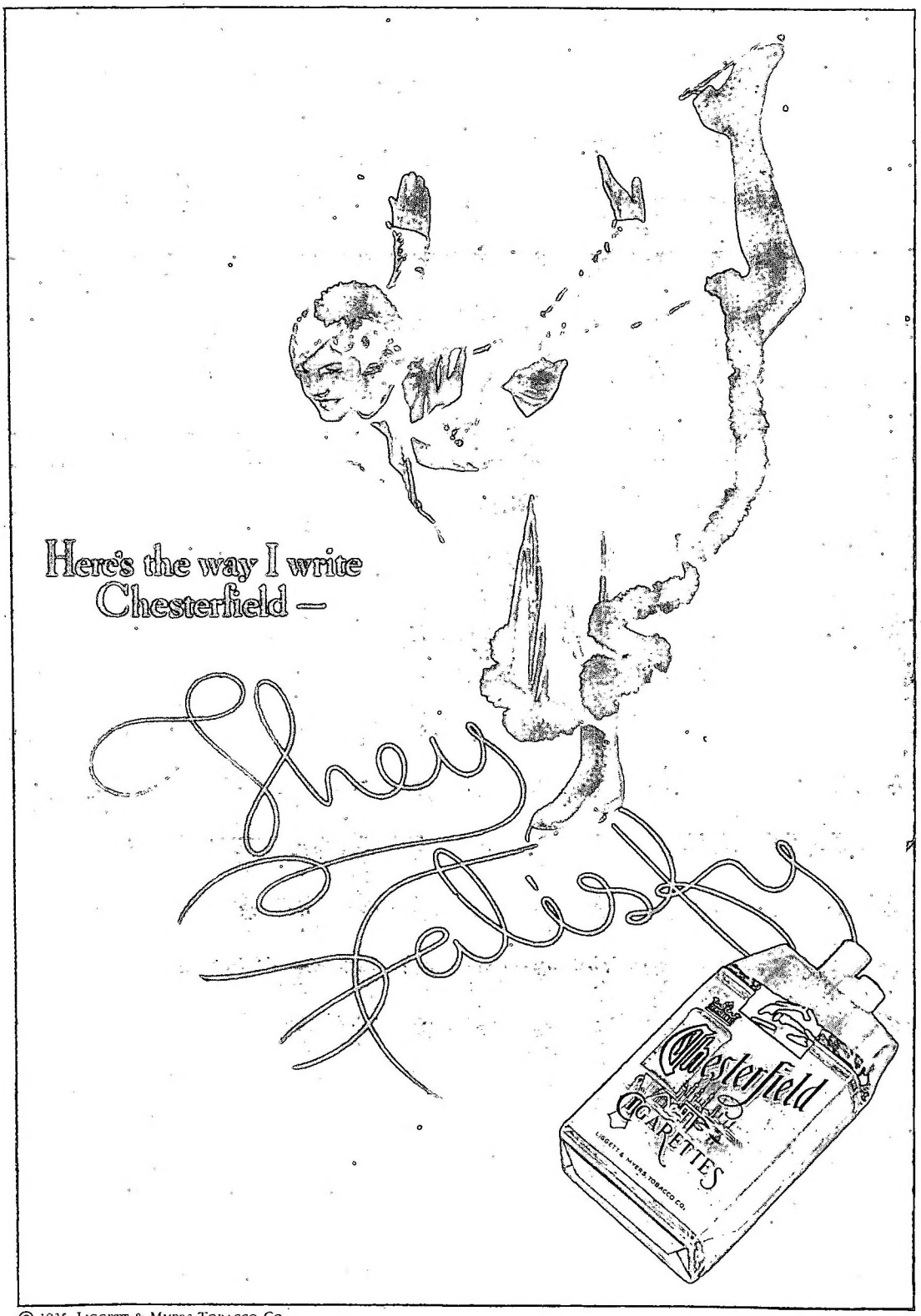

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